

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



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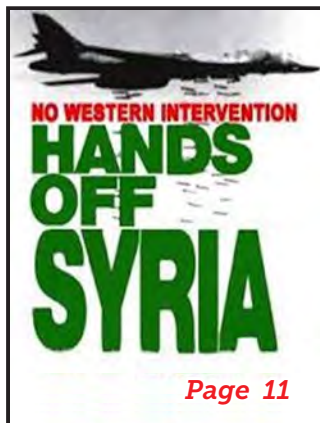


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# OPEN THE BORDERS NOW!



## The Refugee Crisis in Europe Deepens



By Alison Bodine

On October 26 the Mediterranean Sea once again became a grave, as almost 100 refugees fleeing wars, occupations and foreign intervention in their countries drown in the deadly waters. Although rescuers worked to save 29 refugees, at least 97 lost their lives as an over-loaded ship sunk just 42km of the coast of Libya.

So far in 2016, at least one out of every 42 refugees forced to make the dangerous journey over the Mediterranean Sea has died on the journey, making this year the deadliest year ever recorded for the perilous crossing (UN Human Rights Commission - UNHCR).

This startling fact, however, has not stopped refugees from the Middle East and Africa from risking their own lives, and that of their families. No matter the risk, life has become so unlivable in countries ravaged by imperialist wars, occupations, sanctions and intervention that people are left with no other option than to flee to Europe.

There are now over 65 million refugees on the planet, the most ever in human history, and that number continues to grow. In the first 10 months of 2016, over 325,000 refugees have arrived on the shores of Italy and Greece alone (International Organization for Migration - IOM). The majority of refugees making the deadly crossing are from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, all countries that have seen unbelievable death and destruction over the last 15 years of the new era of war and occupation; a period that began with the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. In this time, the US war machine and their imperialist allies including the UK, France and Canada, have completely destroyed basic infrastructure and housing, taken away access to clean water and sanitation, brought rabid corruption and even torn the very social fabric apart that holds these countries together. For people living in the Middle East and Africa, there is no end in sight to this deadly imperialist campaign.

The response of European and wealthy

governments the refugee crisis has been devastating. In fact, the US, UK, France, Germany, Japan and China have accepted less than 9% of the global refugee population, while 86% continue to live in developing countries, as reported by the NGO Oxfam.

### Britain and France Increase the Tragedy Facing Refugees

Rather than accept their responsibility as a leading ally of the United States in their attacks on the Middle East and Africa by opening their borders to refugees, countries in Europe like the UK and France have carried out devastating policies that have increased the tragedy and suffering that refugees face.

Since the refugee crisis in Europe began in 2015, a make-shift refugee camp in Calais, France known as "the Jungle" has been a destination for thousands of refugees struggling to get the opportunity to build a new life in Britain, with many of them hoping to rejoin family members already living there. Without any official support or funding from any government, the camp lacked any regular supply of food, water or shelter and was often violently attacked by the police.

In the early morning of October 24, 1,200 well-armed police officers arrived at the camp in Calais. On the orders of French President François Hollande, the officers were to dismantle the camp and send the refugees living there to processing centres in other areas of France. Over the three days that followed, French officials reported that 4,404 refugees were relocated and 1,200 unaccompanied children were moved temporarily into modified shipping containers near the camp.

Only 70% of the 8,200 refugees that were

estimated to be living in the camp at the end of October were accounted for by the forced relocation. The remaining refugees, including unaccompanied children, fled into the surrounding areas before they could be moved elsewhere, with many reported to have arrived in other camps along France's northern shoreline. This includes a make-shift camp under a railway bridge which told the French television station BFM TV that the refugee population had grown from 2,000 to 3,000 people in just two days. The Save the Children Foundation also reported that hundreds of refugee children were found to be returning to the Calais camp to sleep, even as fires and bulldozers destroyed the camp around them.

It is not only those refugees that stayed, but also those that were relocated, that have an uncertain future. Those that left were taken to "reception centres" in 400 different areas in France. There, they will have to apply for asylum and deportation is a likely outcome for many of the refugees, a majority of whom come from Afghanistan, Eritrea and Sudan. Despite the fact that their home countries have been ravaged by wars, occupations and foreign interventions, the government of France



considers them “safe” enough for the refugees to return.

For example, 2015 was the deadliest year for civilians in Afghanistan in the last 15 years of imperialist occupation. However, despite this fact, the European Union signed an agreement with the government of Afghanistan at the beginning of October that allows an “unlimited” number of refugees to be returned to Afghanistan if their claims for asylum are denied. This essentially opens the door for refugees from Afghanistan to be deported, even those that have already been living in Europe for many years, not to mention the nearly 200,000 Afghan refugees that applied for asylum in Europe last year.

In all of the last year, Britain has resettled only 1,600 Syrian refugees, and just 282 refugees from other parts of Africa and the Middle East through the work of the UNHCR. This shamefully low number is not even a quarter of the refugees living in the camp in Calais at the time of its destruction. Now, the government of Britain has further exposed its inhumanity

However, that is the reality facing hundreds of thousands of children that are refugees not only in northern France, but across Europe today, many of whom have never known a life without war.

According to the UN Refugee Agency, the number of child refugees around the world grew by 77% in the five years from 2010 to 2015. At least 600 children have lost their lives in the Mediterranean Sea in 2016 alone, a number difficult to determine as the age of refugees that die in the sea is often unknown and only 60% of the bodies of drowned refugees are ever recovered (International Organization for Migration).

For many child refugees, their fate when they reach European shores is also unknown. In Italy, the UNHCR recorded that 15% of refugees that arrived so far this year have been unaccompanied children. Aid groups working in refugee camps in Italy have reported that an average of 28 children go missing from the camps every day. Although some may have just run away from the awful conditions they are forced to live in, thousands of them will be trafficked.



*Stranded refugees and migrants protest in front of the wire fence that separates the Greek side from the Macedonian one at the northern Greek border station of Idomeni.*

by agreeing to take in only 300 of the 1,500 unaccompanied children who continue to live near or within the Calais camp, many of whom are joining family members in Britain.

### The Devastating Reality for Child Refugees

The destruction of the camp in Calais will also not change the fact that refugees, including children, will continue to risk their lives to cross the English Channel.

It will not prevent tragedies such as the death of a Raheemullah Oryakhel, a 14 year-old refugee from Afghanistan, who was killed in September when he was run over by a car while trying to climb onto a truck driving en route from France to England, in order to join his brother who lives in Manchester. It should be unthinkable that a 14-year old boy is forced to risk his life jumping onto a moving truck in order to be re-united with his family.

For child refugees in Greece, their fate is no different. There are currently more than 60,000 refugees left stranded in Greece and at least 3,300 of these refugees are unaccompanied children. A recent report by Human Rights Watch described the conditions for these child refugees in Greece, stating,

“Children are being detained for weeks and months, and are being made to live in filthy, bug-and-vermin-infested cells, sometimes without mattresses or access to showers.”

In 2016, the European police agency (Europol) reported that at least 10,000 child refugees had gone missing since the beginning of the refugee crisis. Whether out on their own,

or living in overcrowded and underfunded refugee camps and detention centre with their families, refugee children in Europe are left fighting for their lives, let alone their rights to education, healthcare, housing and proper nutrition.

### Open the Borders! End Wars and Occupations!

Britain and France are not the only Western countries that have fueled the death and destruction that has created the refugee crisis, and then closed their doors to refugees. The same could be said for the United States, France, Germany and yes, even Canada, which has been a strong ally of the US in wars and occupations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya and beyond.

As-long as the United States and their allies continue to bring death and destruction to the Middle East and Africa, refugees will continue to flee to the shores of Europe. This crisis will not be resolved with more fences and walls, nor with more agreements to militarize the border, as European countries are attempting to do. The crisis will only be resolved when the wars and occupations that created it are put to an end.

In order to prevent more needless deaths, human suffering and misery, the only solution to alleviate the crisis is to open the borders and provide safe passage to all refugees.

The government of Canada also carries this same responsibility. Although there have been steps taken to bring in 25,000 government-sponsored Syrian refugees by the end of 2016 (keeping in mind that the Trudeau government initially promised to have 25,000 government-sponsored refugees in Canada by the end of 2015), Canada must do more. Not only can a country with the size and resources of Canada easily accept at least 200,000 more refugees this year, and not just from Syria, but the government of Canada also has the responsibility to grant them full legal, human and citizen rights when they arrive.

### The New Era of War and Occupation

The refugee crisis in Europe is a devastating result of the imperialist wars, occupations and interventions that characterize the world that we live in today. As the world economic crisis

deepens, the US war drive for hegemony and strategic control of the Middle East and Africa is only going to increase, and with it so too will the refugee crisis. As poor and working people in Canada, we must stand with refugees in their struggle for a dignified life and somewhere safe to be, and call for end to imperialist wars, occupations, sanctions and interventions.

Open the Borders Now!

Follow Alison on Twitter: @Alisoncollette



*View of a makeshift camp near the village of Idomeni on the Greek - Macedonia border where thousands of refugees, mainly from Iraq and Syria, are stranded.*



# REPEAL BILL C-51! NO FAKE CONSULTATION

By Thomas Davies

One year ago Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was fresh off a big Federal Election win, and was making headlines for dressing like the Star Wars movie rebel hero Han Solo for Halloween. At the time many probably thought it was a good fit - Trudeau and the Liberals had campaigned on the slogan of, “Real Change Now”, and had made a lot of promises to improve a lot of things. One year later and a lot of people are coming to realize that these unfulfilled promises were more tricks than treats.

## More Public Relations Than Public Engagement

The Liberals haven’t changed anything about Bill C-51, but they have made a few manoeuvres to try and calm public opposition to it. First, they announced legislation to create a “National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians” (NSICOP). This was supposedly to oversee how Bill C-51 and other anti-terrorism laws are being implemented, and to overcome public outcry against the fact that under Bill C-51 the police and secret police have vastly expanded powers of detention, surveillance and “disruption” without any real accountability.

However, a closer look at NSICOP reveals that:

The Committee would be appointed by the Prime Minister, not elected

The Prime Minister has the ability to withhold and limit its access to information

The Committee would mostly see information about actions already completed, so would not be able to stop rights abuses as or before they took place.

The Prime Minister has the final say on whether it can report its findings

The public has no way to interact with the Committee

So with all of these limitations, and with all of the Committee’s power basically held by the Prime Minister, NSICOP really does not address any of our

concerns.

## Consultation?

The Liberals have tried to say as little as possible about Bill C-51 since taking office. When they did comment, it was to promise some sort of “consultation” about Bill C-51 and national security. Now one year later this has taken the form of a poll on a difficult to find website, as well as hearings in five different cities across Canada. In each of these hearings the public had two hours to come and express their opinions. So 10 hours total of open public input for the 35 million people across Canada. Really?



In Vancouver, the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 held it's 84th weekly picket and petition drive against Bill C-51 outside of the hotel where these phony consultations were taking place. It was a very different action than usual. We always choose the busiest locations possible, publicize the action as widely as possible, and attempt to interact with as many people as possible. The Canadian government did the exact opposite. The consultation was basically unadvertised, and reports from inside say there were about 40 people in attendance.

To continue the comparison, this is about half the people who participated in the Working Group's recent conference on Bill C-51, and much much smaller than the 3,500 people who have signed our own petition in Vancouver demanding an immediate repeal to Bill C-51. Let alone the over 300,000 who have signed the online petition demanding a repeal. Reports from across Canada found a similar dynamic. The headline from the one reporter who attended the Bill C-51 hearing in Toronto: "Toronto's Public Hearing on Bill C-51 Was Utterly Demoralizing"

### They Already Made Up Their Minds

If you read the "Green Paper" the government published to accompany the consultation, it's obvious they have already made up their minds. As BC Civil Liberties Association observed, "it reads like it was drafted by a public relations firm tasked with selling the current state of extraordinary, unaccountable powers and if anything, laying the groundwork for extending those even further."



In previous issues of Fire This Time, we already put forward three basic questions to ask to determine if a public consultation is meaningful of not:

Is the consultation independent?  
Is the government bound to implement its findings?  
Is there a timeline for government implementation of the findings?

This consultation is none of these things, and there is no reason to believe the government is going to change it's approach to our human rights.

What we propose instead of these phony consultations is an Independent Public Inquiry into Bill C-51. We do not trust a government that voted in favour of Bill C-51, and who has broken every promise it made about changing it, to properly represent the views of people across Canada. The huge number of people and community organizations who have already been involved in organizing around Bill C-51 would be much more qualified and much more trustworthy to take up the task of really investigating Bill C-51 and its impacts.

### What's Next?

"The onus should be on the government to prove that Bill C-51 is needed and justified -- not on citizens, activists and

civil liberties groups to show that the legislation is dangerous. Neither the Conservative nor Liberal governments brought any evidence, examples, cases or figures forth that could satisfyingly convince citizens that the introduction of this legislation would make the country safer and more secure. It is merely an illusion." - Monia Mazigh, academic, author and human rights activist in recent Huffington Post article, "No Need for Consultations, Canadians Clearly Want Bill C-51 Gone"

The government of Canada has still done absolutely nothing to prove how Bill C-51 makes anybody, anywhere, any safer. They have also left an alarming trail of broken promises, and have shown a preference of creating phony committees and consultations instead of addressing the clear concerns of people across Canada. The Liberal government needs to quit the song and dance and repeal Bill C-51 immediately. Across Canada we must continue to organize to make it obvious to them that we won't give in until Bill C-51 is repealed, and that they must respect our democratic and human rights.

*Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter:  
@thomasdavies59*



# VENEZUELA'S REVOLUTION & WESTERN MEDIA LIES & DECEPTIONS

*By Alison Bodine*

The dangerous media campaign based on lies and deceptions about what is occurring in Venezuela today has grown at the same time that the United States and their allies have increased their meddling in the internal affairs of Venezuela. In turn, the violent and counter-revolutionary opposition in Venezuela has also amplified their attempts to overthrow the government of President Nicolas Maduro and with it the gains made by the people of Venezuela over the last 17 years of the Bolivarian Revolution.

## **Why Working and Oppressed People Must Support President Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution**

Venezuela is a country with a population of 30 million people, located in the Northern section

of the continent of South America. Caracas, the capital city of Venezuela is 3,300km away from Washington, DC, so why is it that Venezuela is so important to the United States and mainstream media?

In 1998 the people of Venezuela elected Hugo Chávez as President, marking the beginning of the Bolivarian Revolution that since then has struggled to overturn centuries of injustice and inequality faced by a majority of Venezuelans. With this victory, the government of Venezuela and the Bolivarian revolution began to make changes that fundamentally improved the lives for millions of poor, working and oppressed people in Venezuela. Poverty decreased dramatically, illiteracy was eradicated, and millions of Venezuelans saw a doctor for the first time, among other great gains for the people of Venezuela. For the first time in Venezuelan history, the

government put the interests of people before those of profit.

President Hugo Chávez passed away in 2013, however the Bolivarian revolution continues led by government of President Nicolás Maduro, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and the tens of thousands of grassroots organizations and civil society groups that carry the gains of the revolution forward. Despite a dramatic drop in the price of oil, Venezuela's main export, as well as attempts by the counter-revolutionary opposition to destabilize Venezuela through

violence and an economic war, the Bolivarian revolution has continued to make tremendous gains for people, both in Venezuela and across Latin America.

Many of the gains of the Bolivarian revolution have come as a result of Social Missions in Venezuela. For example, the social mission for community health, known as Barrio Adentro has brought primary healthcare to the most vulnerable people of Venezuela, many of whom had never once in their lives seen a doctor. Through this mission, Cuban and Venezuelan doctors continue to give free doctors visits, completing over 700 million consultations as of 2015.

In October of 2016, Venezuela marked 11 years as a territory free of illiteracy as declared by the United Nations mission UNESCO. Through the literacy missions more than 2.7 million Venezuelans have been taught to read, including almost 70,000 indigenous peoples who learned to read not only in Spanish, but also in their native languages.

The Bolivarian Revolution has also committed to providing dignified housing for people in Venezuela through the Great Housing Mission which began in 2011. Since then, over 1.2million homes have been constructed and provided to low income Venezuelans.

Venezuela has been recognized for their achievements by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). In 2015, the FAO announced that Venezuela had reduced malnutrition 50%, following their announcement in 2013 that extreme hunger and poverty in Venezuela had also been reduced by 50%, all major milestones in the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), which was founded under the leadership of Hugo Chávez, also continues to be an institution to facilitate Latin American solidarity and cooperation. For example, through ALBA over 3 million people in Latin America have had their



*October 2016: (Above) Maduro supporters hear from the Venezuelan President about the importance of the social missions. (Below) Launching Misión Sucre in the Maneiro municipality of Venezuela*



October 25, 2016: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro speaks at a Rally in Caracas. At the rally a man holds a sign which reads, "With Nicolas Maduro the homeland continues... and the people are with you"

eyesight restored for free, as ALBA allows for trade between countries through goods and services, as well as through monetary exchange.

In October, further announcements have also been made about the formation The Bank of the South. This new bank will begin with a budget provided by the governments of Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela and will work to end the cycle of debt that has been imposed on poor countries in Latin America for decades.

#### **Venezuela's Violent Counter-revolutionary Opposition**

When President Hugo Chávez passed away in 2013, the US government, and the violent and counter-revolutionary opposition that they support, saw an opportunity to increase their efforts to destabilize Venezuela and overturn the gains of the Bolivarian Revolution. In December, 2015 the opposition, organized into a coalition called the MUD won a majority in the Parliamentary elections in Venezuela. Since then, they have increased their efforts to bring about a counter-revolution. Although mainstream Western media paints a pretty picture of the Venezuelan opposition, in reality, the opposition in Venezuela is anything but a peaceful movement for "democracy" and "freedom."

In fact, the counter-revolutionary opposition in Venezuela is no stranger to using violence in order to try and achieve their goals in Venezuela. Their methods range from a coup against President Chavez in 2002 (which was overturned by the mass action of people in Venezuela in less than 48 hours), to violent street riots known as the "Guarimbas" that killed 43 people in 2014.

The opposition in Venezuela has also strengthened their economic war against the people of Venezuela. The capitalist class in Venezuela, whose interests are represented in the counter-revolutionary

opposition, continues to control a majority of the Venezuelan economy, including the distribution and production of food and basic goods. As reported in Volume 10, Issue 8 of Fire This Time, "As researched by Pasqualina Curcio, a Venezuelan economist and professor at Simón Bolívar University, 'Both the production and distribution of the 10 most difficult foods to purchase, for which there are long queues (corn flour, rice, pasta, milk, oil, margarine, coffee, chicken, beef and chicken eggs) are concentrated in no more than 10 large private companies' [www.foodfirst.org](http://www.foodfirst.org)."

As well, reports continue to surface that expose hoarding and sabotage by privately owned Venezuelan and multi-national companies. On October 27, the Venezuelan news site La Tabla reported that Venezuela's largest private producer of basic goods, Polar, reduced its overall production by 30% between July, 2016 and today. The counter -revolutionary capitalist class in Venezuela is manipulating the supply of basic necessities to the people of Venezuela in a violent attempt to starve the people of Venezuela into overthrowing the government.

There is another important deception that mainstream Western media is carrying on about Venezuela, the lie that the current government of Venezuela is somehow undemocratic and in violation of Venezuela's constitution. This claim has been repeated over and over especially as the attempt of the opposition to launch a recall referendum against President Maduro has now been put on hold. However, the reason that the recall referendum was suspended by the National Electoral Council on October 21 is clear and well-within the constitution of Venezuela, a fact that is never mentioned in the media. The opposition simply did not collect enough signatures to proceed after it was found that 30% of the nearly 2 million signatures collected had irregularities. This included, for example, 11,000 signatures from deceased people.

#### **President Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution Confront the Opposition**

***“People here have a need to work and produce and we will not allow a Yankee model of destabilization to install itself here in Venezuela”***

– President Nicolas Maduro

On Wednesday, October 26, President Nicolas Maduro announced that the government of Venezuela would be taking further steps to nationalize idle factories in Venezuela that are found to be complicit in economic sabotage.

This is just one of the many initiatives taken by the government of the Bolivarian Revolution in order to combat the economic war and violence of the counter-revolutionary opposition; steps that mainstream Western media has largely ignored. Other important measures include the raising of the minimum wage by 40%, as well as the introduction of new methods for the distribution of basic goods to communities across Venezuela, known as CLAPs (Local Production and Provisioning Committees).

The government of Venezuela's commitment to continue improving the lives of the majority of people in Venezuela can also be seen in the recent 2017 budget. 73% of the total state budget will be allocated to Venezuela's Social Missions, public works and neighborhood organizations known as communal councils, with much of the budget funded through tax increases to the wealthy.

Not only does major media not report at all on the steps taken by the government of Venezuela to fight back against the economic crisis and scarcity, they have also been relentless in their claims that Venezuela is facing a "humanitarian crisis." This claim was refuted outright by executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for

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# HANDS OFF YEMEN! HANDS OFF BAHRAIN!

## Imperialist Countries Imposing More War & Destruction in the Middle East

By Azza Rojbi

*"The Gulf regionnized by every American President since Franklin Delano Roosevelt as an area of absolute vital strategic importance for the United States. Not only is it the energy storehouse of the world -- home to two thirds of the proven oil reserves of the globe -- but it is also the nexus where three continents come together. Nowhere else in the world have U.S. military forces been more actively engaged in the last quarter century than here."* - Said Bruce Riedel, a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analyst and currently one of the leading secu has been recogrity expert in the US.

This excerpt is from a speech that Riedel gave at the Washington Institute's 1998 Soref Symposium, it outlines very clearly the United States policy towards the Gulf region. The US and their imperialist allies have their hands all over the Arabian peninsula, consolidating relationships with puppet regimes and working to stop the rise of any independent or sovereign government



Anti-government protest in Bahrain.

in the region.

Two notable crises have been deepening in the Arabian peninsula and are showing the hypocrisy of the US government and its imperialist allies; the crisis of the Saudi led war on Yemen and the crisis of the tyrannical and repressive regime in Bahrain also with the help and assistance of Saudi regime.

### ► YEMEN: HUMANITARIAN CRISES INTENSIFIES

A headline from an Associated Press article dated October 31, reads "UN official says Yemen on verge of collapse". The article goes on to cite the UN Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator (USG/ERC) Stephen O'Brien as he "told the Security Council that 80 percent of Yemenis, some 21.2 million people, need some form of humanitarian assistance and over 2 million people, including 370,000 children, are suffering from malnutrition."

It has been over 19 months since the US backed Saudi led coalition started its war against the people of Yemen. Schools, hospitals, homes, and other civilian infrastructure have been constantly bombed and destroyed by the Saudi airstrikes. According to the United Nations (UN), over 10,000 people have been killed and at

least 3 million people have been internally displaced due to the Saudi led war on Yemen.

Most recently, on October 8 2016, the Saudi led coalition bombed a funeral hall in Sana'a, the capital of Yemen. The Associated Press reported that at least 140 people were killed and more than 600 were wounded in the air strikes. Horrific photos and videos emerged of the human devastation as a result of this brutal attack.

Scott Paul, Oxfam America Senior Humanitarian Policy Advisor, said in a public statement referring to the bombing: "this was a massacre of civilians, apparently carried out by Saudi warplanes fueled and supported by the United States. It is telling that after initially denying responsibility wholesale, Saudi Arabia announced an investigation into the attack with support from US experts. Not for the first time, Saudi Arabia is using US support to legitimize its criminal conduct and deflect international criticism"

### • The United States and its imperialist allies have blood on their hands

Under the pretext of brining stability and legitimacy back to Yemen, the Saudi led coalition began its bombing campaign on 26 March 2015. Saudi Arabia has also imposed a naval, aerial and land blockade on the country which restricts people's travel and access to food, fuel, medicine and humanitarian aid.

Since the beginning of the airstrikes, the US and UK have been closely providing logistical and political support to the Saudi led coalition. US airplanes carried out more the 1,000 refuelling sorties to refuel the coalition's fighter jets. American and British military officials have been present in the command and control centres with Saudi



Taiz, Yemen. March 14, 2016



*More than 1,000,000 Yemenis protest Saudi/U.S. bombing. Aug 22, 2016.*



command officers.

In addition the US has helped replenish Saudi Arabia's weapons. In 2015, the US government approved \$20 billion in arms deal with Saudi Arabia. The U.K. has also approved £2.8 billion (about \$3.4 billion) in arms sales to Saudi Arabia since the beginning of the war on Yemen.

The US, UK and their imperialist allies are accomplice to all the atrocities committed by the Saudi led coalition against the people of Yemen. Contrary to what they pretend, this war is not to bring peace and stability to the Yemenis. The main objective is to diminish the popular movement for freedom and democracy in Yemen and assert the hegemony of the US and its imperialist allies over the Middle East and North Africa. A strong and independent Yemen is not in the interest of US or its puppet regime in Saudi Arabia.

#### ● **Building antiwar movement in defence of people of Yemen**

As peace loving people in North America we have the duty to defend the Yemeni people against this brutal war by the Saudi regime. We also have to hold our governments accountable for their support and complicity in this war crimes against Yemen. Canada is no different! The Canadian government approved a \$15 billion arms deal to supply Saudi Arabia with armored military vehicles.

Yemen is for Yemenis to decide who and how they want their government to be. In Vancouver, the antiwar coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) have been organizing, rallies, petition drives and educational forums to demand an end to the Saudi led bombing campaign against Yemen, the cancelling of the Canadian arms deal with Saudi Arabia and the lift of the criminal blockade on the country to allow goods and humanitarian aid to reach people in need.

#### ► **BAHRAIN:**

#### **POLITICAL CRISES DEEPENS**

Since mid-February 2011, Bahrain have been the center of mass protests and demonstration on almost a daily bases. The brave Bahraini people rose up to fight for their democratic rights and were met with brutal crackdown from the ruling Al Khalifah regime with the help of military troops sent from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

It is important here to note that the armored vehicles that Saudi Arabia sent to crush peaceful protest in Bahrain were very likely made in Canada and sold to Saudi Arabia throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. In May 2015, The Globe and Mail reported, "Asked if it believes the Saudis used made-in-Canada LAVs when they went into Bahrain, the Canadian government doesn't deny this happened." The Canadian government continues to turn a blind eye on Saudi human rights violations. A more sophisticated version of this armored vehicles is currently being sold to Saudi Arabia.

Bahrain is a very strategic ally to imperialist countries. The kingdom is home to the Fifth Fleet of the United States Navy deployed in the Persian Gulf which include military ships, combat aircraft and more than 3000 US marines and sailors.

On Saturday October 29, 2016, Britain's Express newspaper announced in an article the opening of a British military base in Bahrain "A MASSIVE Middle Eastern military base will be opened by Britain for the first time in more than 40 years amid growing global tensions...Around 600 UK military personnel will be stationed at the Bahrain Royal Navy facility, which will be used as a platform to stamp out terror in the volatile region."

The interests of the US and their imperialist allies lies in keeping the current Bahraini tyrannical regime in power. It comes as no surprise that they overlook the Bahraini government inhuman and brutal crackdown



on peaceful protesters.

#### ● **Repression and oppression of protest continues**

Despite the government's attempts to crush the opposition movement, the Bahraini people have continued their struggle against the U.S. puppet Al Khalifa dynasty's over-40-year rule. The Bahrain government have been torturing and jailing human rights and pro-democracy activist, as well as revoking the citizenship of some and deporting them out of the country to try to silence their voices.

Deputy Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at Amnesty International, said in a report released on March 2016 that "The increasing tendency to resort to expulsion of individuals who have had their nationality arbitrarily revoked is a chilling development that points to the wider erosion of human rights in Bahrain in recent years."

Recently on October 27 2016, a Bahraini court has imprisoned and revoked the citizenship of more than a dozen people. According to the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights BCHR, more than 261 Bahrainis were stripped of their citizenship since 2012.

#### ● **Free Nabeel Rajab and all political prisoners in Bahrain!**

Nabeel Rajab, the President of BCHR and prominent human rights activist, has been detained since 13 June 2016 on charges of "false or malicious news, statements, or rumours," "offending a foreign country" (Saudi Arabia), and "offending a statutory body" after tweets he published in 2015 about torture in Bahraini prisons and Saudi violations in the war on Yemen.

Just recently the Bahraini High Criminal Court postponed the trial of Rajab to December 15 2016 for the fourth time in a row. This shows the lack of evidence against him and the constant attempt of the Bahraini government to gain time to construct a case against Rajab. Nabeel's health situation have been deteriorating in prison due to extremely poor and unhygienic conditions and his

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By Asaad Aljaboubi

Translation By Azza Rojbi

Vancouver's peace coalition Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) organized a day of actions and protests for peace in front of the US consulate and the art gallery in Vancouver, Canada, to denounce the US-Saudi unjust aggression on Yemen.

Participants at the protest condemned the governments of Canada, US and UK for their support to the Saudi tyrannical and dictatorial regime and demanded that they stop all arms deals with Saudi Arabia.

Participants also collected signatures to a petition to the Canadian government, headed by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, demanding to stop the Canadian arms sale to Saudi Arabia. The arms deal is worth 15 billion dollars for the sale of armored military vehicles to Saudi Arabia.

Speaking to the protest in front of the US Consulate, MAWO's chairperson Alison Bodine emphasized the support of MAWO and all honest and peace loving people in Canada to the Yemeni people against the Saudi aggression and condemned the Saudi led aerial bombardment of civilian sites such as schools, hospitals, highways, buses, weddings and funerals. Alison also denounced the recent Saudi airstrike on a funeral hall in Sana'a, leading to at least 140 people killed and more than 400 wounded.

Brian, from CPCML, spoke at the protest and confirmed that Saudi Arabia's actions in the Middle East are unacceptable and that their policies of supporting terrorism and fueling conflicts and wars in Syria, Iraq and Yemen will not go without consequences.

Asaad Aljaboubi, leading Yemeni community organizer with MAWO, confirmed that the Saudi aggression on Yemen, which began in March 2015, is responsible for killing more than 10 thousand people, mostly civilians, children, women, and tens of thousands of injured. Asaad also explained the economic situation in Yemen as a tragic result of the Saudi air, sea and land imposed blockade on the country. This has especially created a crisis of salaries and the forced relocation of the Central Bank from Sana'a to Aden. Also the prohibition of any flights over Yemen has negatively impacted the transfer of injured

and wounded patients for treatment outside Yemen and obstructed the return of Yemenis stuck in a number of foreign countries.

In the second part of the day of action for Yemen, participants set up an outreach tent in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery. The tent included a presentation showing the amount of destruction and atrocities committed by Saudi Arabia in Yemen through images, news and brochures in addition to collecting signatures from people passing by to stop the Canadian arms deal with Saudi Arabia.

It is also important to mention that these protests in Vancouver were part of an International Day of Action in Solidarity with Yemen, planned in coordination with several international organizations in Britain, Sweden, Italy, Brussels, the US and Spain. These international organizations, including MAWO, plan to continue having international coordinated events to support the Yemeni people against the Saudi regime's war and aggression.

## VANCOUVER IN SOLIDARITY WITH PEOPLE OF YEMEN



### *Candles of Humanity a poem by Wala Zaidan*

In my hopeless nights the cries are silent  
weeping onto my weak shoulders blood spilled  
on my chest, a truth unspeakably violent

In my hopeless nights the funeral song is  
played by mendacious angels the dead is  
dancing with justice playing the song of  
freedom loudly echoing softly in my ears "I am  
not afraid"

In my lonely nights; it's dark. even the moon  
betrayed it's own promise So we lightened the  
Candles of humanity with our burning hearts  
just to see peace hung where Jesus was  
crucified a voice tamed by the sacred truth an  
illusion that's never seems to be denied and  
every time I try to drown my insane thoughts it  
just repeatedly gets baptized.

Cure me, God. I carried a war zone in my  
own mentality I see nothing but Nameless  
gravestones dug under my tongue, and when I  
speak I speak their names with scars

I question if life is a dream then we shouldn't  
blame no mankind for the cause of wars

I hope this is not reality because every time I  
turn on the TV;

loud explosive destroying my emotions, A  
scar of bright light hung in the bat-black sky,  
protecting myself from angry guilty bullets,  
and I can hear civilians screaming in rage  
but still waving the flag of peace, A flag that  
screams freedom Red blood sprayed from my  
wounds, Men were groaning and yowling as  
the battlefield became slick with guts, being  
swallowed by the battle ground, and river  
blood spilled into the air. It tasted bitter and  
sweet, then ...silence as the sky fades cobra-  
black

i snapped out of my fantasy a instant regret of  
who I want to be I have become a revolution in  
my own mentality.

I...I stand with you even when truth denied you  
Am with you at war too.

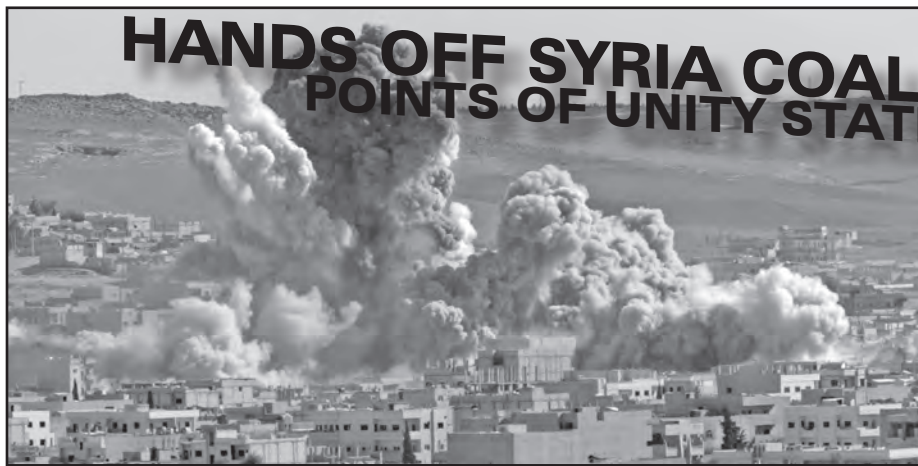
I carry this young voice trapped inside of me  
She tells me stories of how paradise is full  
of beautiful people and trustful angels where  
every human being is equal

but she weeps every night in my sleep, weeps  
for the world and it's greediness then she  
crawls back to her grave

I don't know if it's a dream or my ill mind but  
she has become a voice inside me matter fact I  
still question if I wrote this poem

for my words have set my voice free I have  
become a revolution of humanity a candle that  
burns daily.





Dear Friends of Peace and Justice in the U.S. and the World,

We are very pleased to announce that, following a lengthy round of deliberations among several organizations and leading individuals in the peace movement about the urgent need for a broad coalition to oppose war and U.S./NATO intervention for a forced regime change in Syria, numerous organizations and prominent leaders of the peace movement have signed on the Coalition's Points of Unity statement and have agreed to cooperate within the framework of an Ad Hoc coalition named Hands Off Syria Coalition.

Our objective is to create the broadest possible united front for peace and justice by peace activists and organizations in the U.S. and around the world to fight for an end all violence, intervention and sanctions against Syria, which is now threatening world peace.

We have attached below our Points of Unity statement for your review. It is our sincere hope that you will also agree with this statement and join this broad coalition, either as an organization or as a pro-peace individual.

We sincerely thank you for considering this invitation, and ask you to kindly distribute this invitation broadly.

Hands Off Syria Coalition

## U.S. Hands Off Syria

An Urgent Message for Peace on the Eve of Wider War

We raise our voices against the violence of war and the enormous pressure of war propaganda, lies and hidden agendas that are used to justify this war and every past U.S. war.

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, endorse the following Points of Unity and will work together as an Ad Hoc Coalition to help put an end to the regime change intervention by the United States,

NATO and their regional allies and the killing of innocent people in Syria:

The continuation of the war in Syria is the result of a U.S.-orchestrated intervention by the United States, NATO, their regional allies and reactionary forces, the goal of which is regime change in Syria.

This policy of regime change in Syria is illegal and in clear violation of the United Nations Charter, the letter and spirit of international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This policy of forced regime change is threatening the security of the region and the world and has increased the danger of direct confrontation between the United States and Russia, with the potential of a nuclear catastrophe for the whole world.

War and U.S. and EU sanctions have destabilized every sector of Syria's economy, transforming a once self-sufficient country into an aid-dependent nation. Half the Syrian population is now displaced. A UN ESCWA report reveals these U.S. sanctions on Syria are crippling aid work during one of the largest humanitarian emergency since World War II. The one third of Syrians refugees in surrounding Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey have been hit hard by U.S. cuts to UNICEF. This forces desperate refugees to struggle to reach Europe.

No foreign entity, be it a foreign government or an armed group, has the right to violate the fundamental rights of the Syrian people to independence, national sovereignty and self-determination. This includes the right of the Syrian government to request and accept military assistance from other countries, as even the U.S. government has admitted.

Only the people of Syria have the inalienable right to choose their leaders and determine the character of their government, free from foreign intervention. This right cannot be properly exercised under the conditions of U.S.-orchestrated foreign intervention against the Syrian people.

Our opposition is to forced regime change in Syria by U.S.-backed foreign powers and their mercenaries. It is not our business to support or oppose President Assad or the Syrian government. Only the Syrian people have the right to decide the legitimacy of their government.

The most urgent issue at present is peace and putting an end to the violence of foreign intervention that has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and the displacement of millions of Syrians both internally or as refugees abroad.

Based on these Points of Unity, we, as individuals and organizations—in an Ad Hoc Coalition—agree on the following demands and commit ourselves to working together to help achieve them:

An immediate end to the U.S. policy of forced regime change in Syria and full recognition and compliance by the U.S., NATO and their allies with principles of international law and the U.N. Charter, including respect for the independence and territorial integrity of Syria.

An immediate end to all foreign aggression against Syria, and serious efforts toward a political resolution to the war.

An immediate end to all military, financial, logistical and intelligence support by the U.S., NATO and their regional allies to all foreign mercenaries and extremists in the Middle East region.

An immediate end to economic sanctions against Syria. Massive international aid for displaced people within Syria and Syrian refugees abroad.

Only in a peaceful and independent Syria, free of foreign aggression, can the people of Syria freely exercise their sovereign rights, express their free will and make free choices about their government and their country's leadership.

We invite all supporters of peace and peoples' right to self-determination around the world to join hands of cooperation in this effort to achieve these most humanitarian demands.

We need jobs, healthcare, education and an end to racist police violence here at home, not U.S. wars abroad!!

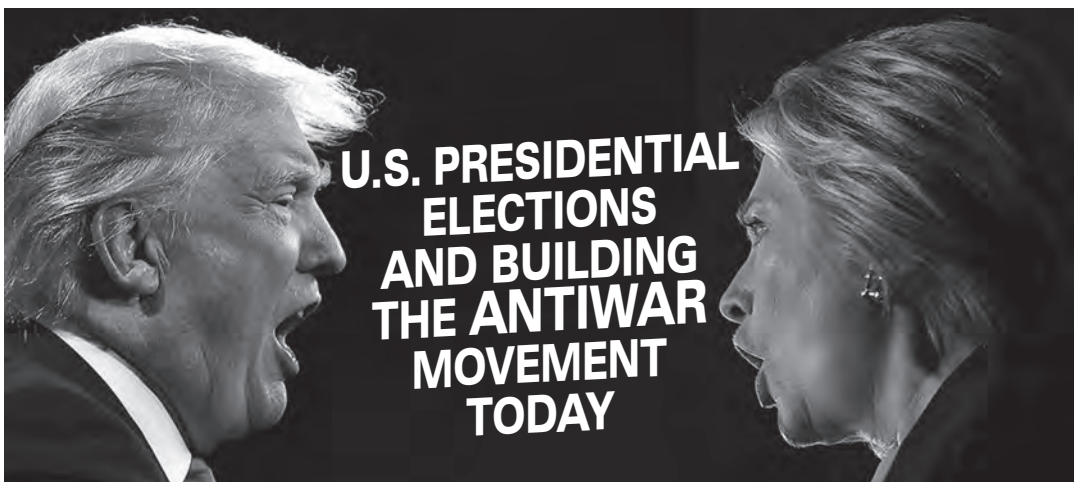
[www.handsoffsyriacoalition.net](http://www.handsoffsyriacoalition.net)



By Janine Solanki, Azza  
Rojbi and Alison Bodine\*

In our world today, anyone under the age of 15 has never known a world that is not at war. While there have been other times of war, the last 15 years have seen a sustained, increasing and deliberately planned war drive, with US imperialism leading the charge.

This new era of war and occupation started with the 2001 war and occupation of Afghanistan which still continues today and has even become more dangerous, with the United Nations reporting that 2015 was the deadliest year for Afghan civilians. In 2003 the invasion and occupation of Iraq began on the claim of fighting terror and weapon of mass destruction which now has become a new war with the excuse of fighting Islamic State or Daesh (also known as ISIS). Daesh, it must be noted, only existed and grew under US occupation in Iraq and as a result of US funding and arming so-called "rebel" mercenaries in Syria. The 2011 war on Libya turned the country with the highest living standard in Africa to a complete chaos and a failed state. Not to forget, the so-called "forgotten war" in Yemen has seen daily bombings for the last 18 months by the Saudi-led coalition against people of Yemen. Although the US government has tried to downplay their role in this brutal war and humanitarian crisis, the war is carried out with US surveillance and logistical support, as well as US arms deals and even US drone strikes. In Syria, the last 5 years of a US fomented civil war have resulted in more than 400,000 people killed and nearly half of the country's



population has had to flee their homes.

This list could continue, from US aggressions in Latin America, especially with sanctions, threats and covert operations in Venezuela, to the US-backed coup in Ukraine, interventions throughout Africa and the build-up of NATO forces in Eastern Europe on the border with Russia.

#### **Building Anti war Movement Is A Necessity Not An Option**

This sustained and increasing new era of war and occupation has come at a human cost, with innocent people killed and countries and lives torn apart. We also have seen what happens after 15 years of war making so many countries uninhabitable. Today the world is seeing the largest refugee crisis in history, as those fleeing war zones are making the perilous journey to arrive in Europe as refugees.

15 years of the new era of war and occupation has not only continued for such a long time, it has persisted and expanded under both Republican and Democratic party administrations in the US. While the results of the upcoming US election remain to be decided on November 8th, we can be sure that either candidate, Republican or Democrat, Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton, will be a war president. 15 years of this war drive is enough to tell peace and justice loving people world-wide that we need an active, united and effective antiwar movement.

So far, the antiwar movement has not been nearly active or large enough. As we are moving to an even more aggressive war president, whichever candidate that it may be, it is ever more vital to build the antiwar

movement as our immediate task.

Looking at the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton and Republican candidate Donald Trump, it is easy to see that war is a top agenda point for both candidates. With Clinton, unlike Trump, we have a track record to judge her from decades of political involvement and office. While with Trump his views on war shift from "I want to be unpredictable" to "I would bomb the s— out of 'em".

#### **Clinton and Trump, The Modern Ares and Enyo (goddess and god of war)**

Although Hillary Clinton is trying to back-peddle on her opinion now, the facts are that Hillary Clinton did very well support, with her vote as senator of New York, the war on Iraq. As for Afghanistan, she has supported the war and in 2009 as Secretary of State she supported the troop surge that saw over 30,000 more US troops enter Afghanistan. She also supported President Obama's plan to keep a US troop presence in Afghanistan through the end of his term which, if she becomes president, leaves her with US troops still in Afghanistan.

Clinton's most famous military spotlight was in Libya, where she was the face for US involvement in the 2011 undeclared war on Libya. This included the extent of US Special Operations in Libya, backing the Libyan so-called rebels, orchestrating a massive demonization campaign of the former Libyan President Ghaddafi, conducting with NATO a no-fly zone which was effectively a massive bombing campaign against Libya, right down to the assassination of Ghaddafi. Her callus and war-hungry nature was famously caught on video when her reaction to news that Ghaddafi had been killed was to laugh and say "We came, we saw, he died!"

Clinton's next step, if she is to make it to the Presidency, is to implement a "no-fly zone" over Syria. That is, as we saw in Libya, not a no-one flies zone but an only US can fly zone... in other words, a way to escalate US airstrikes in Syria and create provocations



with the Syrian government and Russia.

With Donald Trump, besides being on the Republican ticket which has its own deadly track record, he also speaks to and activates the most dangerous underbelly of Republican Americans. Trump is a war monger demagogue, using fear mongering and appealing to racist, discriminatory and jingoist tendencies among the American public. While constantly changing his foreign policy statements, there is enough evidence to prove that one of his few consistencies is that he would most definitely be a war president, of unknown proportions.

Despite his assertions that he didn't mean what he said, there is more than enough proof (as in audio recordings) to show his support for the initial invasion of Iraq. However, there is much more current proof of his war mongering disposition, and it's not just his claim that "I'm really good at war". Regarding Libya, in a 2011 video blog post Trump proposed "we should go in" and suggested that those who "end up taking over the country eventually" will "appreciate" the U.S. intervention and that "they should pay us back" for the military assistance with their oil. More succinctly, in an April 2011 interview with Wall Street Journal Trump said "I'm only interested in Libya if we take the oil. If we don't take the oil, I'm not interested." He did clarify his support for the assassination of former Libyan President Ghaddafi in a more recent June 5, 2016 CBS interview in which he said "I could have seen surgical where you take out Gaddafi and his group."

While how to combat Daesh has been a major election position, Trump laid out his plan at a November 12, 2015 rally in Fort Dodge, Iowa. "I would bomb the s— out of 'em. I would just bomb those suckers. That's right. I'd blow up the pipes. ... I'd blow up every single inch. There would be nothing left." A few months later during a March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016 debate he said "We have to knock out ISIS," "I would listen to the generals, but I'm hearing numbers of 20,000 to 30,000." How and where, as in is this his prescription for Iraq, Syria or both, is not clear.

Trump has also laid out his plans to build up the US military, when during an NBC "Meet the Press" interview in October 2015 he said "I'm gonna build a military that's gonna be much stronger than it is right now. It's gonna be so strong, nobody's gonna mess with us." Trump also called for increasing the number of ships, submarines and fighter jets, and to bolster the US's missile defense systems, including modernizing Navy cruiser ships.

Trump's preference for a hard line approach in matters of war abroad is echoed in his policies at home. He is well known for his inflammatory Islamophobic statements,

which include a call to ban Muslims from the US. He even stated that he would send Syrian refugees accepted to the US back by saying, "I'm putting the people on notice that are coming here from Syria as part of this mass migration, that if I win, if I win, they're going back" at a September 30, 2015 event in Keene, NH.

### **We Need An Urgent and Serious Political and Organizational Preparation**

The bottom line is, Trump and Clinton both are promoting a bigger military, tougher policing and more troops in Iraq, and the antiwar movement needs to stand for our rights to protest and any attempts to take them away, and needs to do by exercising them. The antiwar movement needs to prepare and start organizing now, not wait for what type of Trump-style attacks may be in store if he ends up as president.

While this article is a call to antiwar organizations and peace-loving people to come together in building the antiwar movement, the next question is, how? For an antiwar movement to be strong and effective it must have a clear and unwavering antiwar position, it must organize consistently and not on an occasional basis, and be always working to unite with different groups locally, nationally and very importantly internationally.

In Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) in Vancouver, Canada, we recently marked 13 years of antiwar organizing. From the beginning to today, MAWO has been organizing on the basis of the principles prescribed above, and this has enabled us to grow to being the most active and consistent antiwar organization in Canada. It is with the experience of the last 13 years that we are taking on the new turn towards an escalated war drive that is sure to come with the election of the next US president.

In order to have any sort of legitimacy, our antiwar positions need to make sense and not waver, even if it may seem unpopular in the face of right-wing mainstream media spinning confusion and manipulating public opinion. The guiding line always comes back to self-determination for all oppressed nations. Those who have the most genuine interests at heart are the people of a particular nation, and certainly not a foreign government crying crocodile tears while their track record shows that every foreign imperialist military intervention only resulted in more bloodshed. We must fight the amnesiac and uncritical attitude that mainstream media promotes, which looks at a given situation without any background or history, and remember that we have the truth on our side, we just need to make it heard. As Fidel Castro once said, "The truth must not be only the truth, it must be told."

*The New Era of War & Occupation*



How to make the message against war and for peace heard is of course a difficult task when you don't have access to media outlets. So we must educate, organize and mobilize with consistency and creativity. The ruling classes, whether administered by Obama, Clinton or Trump, do not occasionally promote their war drive, or occasionally carry out military operations. It is day in day out for them, and it must be day in day out for the antiwar movement if we are to be effective. Without the same kind of money or resources as the ruling class, we have to be creative in finding every way we can to promote antiwar politics. Needless to say that to be successful we must become united. Unity in action is our secret to success. With the advance of social media, this is an outlet and tool that antiwar organizations can utilize but by no means should replace the importance of organizing and mobilizing on the streets.

In MAWO we know consistency with every monthly rally and petition campaign we hold, at least monthly public forums, and through newsletters and literature, statements and press releases. Creativity catches peoples attention when our rally includes a photo exhibit of the war on Yemen, or a forum opens with a poetry reading. Also, MAWO has held nine Hip Hop Festivals for Peace which have broadened the scope of antiwar politics to the Hip Hop community and especially towards youth. The festival has helped to promote the message that antiwar politics are for everyone, and artists and youth have an important role to play in the antiwar movement. MAWO's Film Festival for Peace has been held 10 times, and is truly a one of a kind example of how the medium of film can bring the brutality of war and occupation home for people and encourage them to get involved. These festivals, as well as MAWO's regular antiwar cultural nights, are not just "using" art to bring forward an antiwar message, but recognizing that art reflects our human experiences which in today's world include experiences of war, occupation and oppression.

### **Three Factors of Success: Unity, Unity & Unity**

While we can do great work in one organization, it is no match for when we are united, coordinated and collaborating with other organizations in our own city, across the country and around the world. We cannot build



a movement in just individual organizations, but when we join together we can become an effective and powerful movement. In MAWO we have worked to connect with communities in Vancouver, such as the Muslim and Middle Eastern communities, as well as the Indigenous and Latin American communities. We have established connections with students organizing on their campuses and with environmental activists, bridging the gaps of singular issues to build the understanding that antiwar and social justice issues are often fighting the same battles, and we are much stronger when supporting each other and working together. This continues

nationally and internationally, and MAWO has hosted antiwar organizers and activists from across the US for events in Vancouver, the last year alone has taken MAWO organizers to Montreal to participate in the World Social Forum and to London, England for an International Conference on Yemen.

We have now recently joined as a founding member to an important initiative called the Hands Off Syria Coalition. A basis of unity has been circulating world wide, with currently 206 organizations signed on and 1183 individual signers. This is a great step forward for uniting social justice and antiwar organizations and individuals around the world to bring an end to the foreign intervention and sanctions against Syria. Today Syria is focal point for imperialist to advance their attack on us and oppressed people world wide. We can not afford to be defeated by imperialists in Syria, period. Humanity is at stake. More on this new coalition can be found at <http://handsoffsyriacoalition.net>

With the days counting down to the results of the US election, for antiwar activists

we already know the result will be a war president. We must not hesitate or wait for the new president to move, but immediately increase our efforts to build a united and effective antiwar movement. After 15 years of the new era of war and occupation showing no signs of slowing down, building the antiwar movement is a vital task for not only antiwar and social justice activists but for all peace and justice loving people around the world. Let's join together to bring an end to the brutal wars killing our brothers and sisters, destructing humanity and civilization and work for a world without war and for peace. We are not just a dreamer, we are many, we are majority.

No to war and occupation! Yes to self-determination!  
US Hands Off Syria!  
US/UK Saudi Arabia Hands Off Yemen!

*\* Janine Solanki, Azza Rojbi and Alison Bodine are central organizers and members of the executive committee of Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.*

## MAWOWE'EN CELEBRATES 13 YEARS OF ANTI-WAR ORGANIZING IN VANCOUVER!

By Noah Fine

It's not often that a political anti-war group adopts an annual event such as Halloween each year, but luckily for Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO), the two came together naturally from the beginning.

Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) formed on October 29, 2003 to organize against the US/UK occupation of Iraq. Since then, MAWO has been a constant antiwar voice in Canada and internationally demanding an end to all imperialist wars and occupations as well as self-determination for all oppressed nations. In the last 13 years MAWO has organized hundreds of pickets, protests, petition drives and cultural events. This has also included music and film festivals, as well as participating in countless community and campus events. Both by working closely with, and as a member of international antiwar organizations and coalitions, MAWO has also worked to build a stronger and more united antiwar movement.

On October, 28th, 2016, MAWO marked 13 years of antiwar organizing with a night of antiwar poetry featuring original pieces by some of Vancouver's best artists, as well as readings of some of the world's best poetry against war and occupation. Of course, MAWOWE'EN is also an excellent opportunity to get

dressed up in a favourite costume and enjoy some special treats!

Participants were welcomed to the event by MAWO executive committee members Alison Bodine, Janine Solanki and Azza Rojbi who explained the founding of MAWO 13 years before and presented a slide show of MAWO's history.

The cultural aspect of the program followed with many local activists and artists sharing their original poetry as well as poetry written by celebrated poets from around the world.

Iraqi Muslim youth activist and exceptional poet Wala Zaidan read some of her original poetry which explores the realities facing people living under war. One of the poems she read that night appears in this issue of Fire This Time.

All of the poets were greeted with enthusiastic applause from participants who spent the night sharing stories and reminiscing over the last 13 years of activism while looking forward to where the anti-war movement must go from here.

The evening came to a close with MAWO chair Alison Bodine welcoming people to get involved in the antiwar movement as globally people come to realize that wars, occupations and resistance are defining features of the world we live in.





**- MONTHLY RALLY & PETITION CAMPAIGN -**

**U.S. HANDS OFF SYRIA!**  
**U.S. & SAUDI ARABIA HANDS OFF YEMEN!**

**CANADA:**  
**CANCEL THE ARMS DEAL**  
**WITH SAUDI ARABIA!**  
**MONEY FOR JOBS, HEALTHCARE,**  
**EDUCATION, HOUSING &**  
**ENVIRONMENT! NOT FOR WAR!**

**FRIDAY NOVEMBER 25 - 4:30PM**  
**VANCOUVER ART GALLERY**  
**ROBSON STREET AT HOWE STREET**  
**DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER, BC**

Canada Out of NATO NOW! No to NATO! No to War! U.S. Out of Syria! No to War on Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan! Canada Out of Iraq! Canada Out of Afghanistan! Turkey Out of Syria and Iraq! No to Islamophobia! Israel Stop Aiding Israeli Settlers! Stop Settling West Bank, Soldier of Humility! Israel Hands Off Palestine! End the Occupation! Israel Open the Borders! Stop War and Occupation, Stop Refusing U.S. & NATO! Canada Hands Off Ukraine! U.S. Hands Off Venezuela! End the Blockade of Cuba! Life AN Soldiers Against War! No to U.S. Drone! U.S. Hands Off North Africa and the Middle East! No to War & Occupation! Yes to Self Determination! No to War & Occupation! No to Environmental Degradation! Money for Jobs, Housing, Healthcare and Education, Not for War and Occupation! Self-Determination for Indigenous Nations and All Oppressed Nations! Negate Inhuman and Repressive Bill C-51!

**MOBILIZATION AGAINST WAR & OCCUPATION | MAWVAN**  
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## DEFIANT SYRIA:

dispatches from the Second  
International Tour of Peace  
to Syria



by Ken Stone

Veteran, Canadian, anti-war activist Ken Stone has written a series of reports from the Second International Tour of Peace which visited Syria from April 12-18, 2016. The eye-witness reports document the observance of the Syrian parliamentary elections of April 13; the destruction and reconstruction in Homs; the peace and reconciliation efforts of the Syrian government towards the armed opposition; the damage wrought by ISIS upon the ancient world heritage site at Palmyra; and the defiant, upbeat, and resilient attitudes of Syrians about the future, despite five long years of foreign aggression against their country.

Get your copy online at Amazon,  
Kobo and iTunes!

The New Era of War & Occupation



continued from page 9

detention in solitary confinement.

On September 4, 2016 Nabeel Rajab published an Op-Ed essay in the New York Times titled "Letter From a Bahraini Jail". After the article came out, The Bahraini prosecutors were quick to add a new charge against Rajab for publishing "false news and statements and malicious rumors that undermine the prestige of the kingdom."

Here is an excerpt from Nabeel's letter from prison:

*"RIFFA, Bahrain — I write this from a Bahraini jail cell where I have been detained, largely in isolation, since the beginning of summer. This is not new to me: I have been here before, from 2012 to 2014, in 2015, and now again, all because of my work as a human rights defender.*

*Nor am I alone: There are some 4,000 political prisoners in Bahrain, which has the highest prison population per capita in the Middle East. This is a country that has subjected its people to imprisonment, torture and even death for daring to desire democracy. My close colleague Abdulhadi al-Khawaja was tortured and sentenced to life in prison in 2011 for his human rights work."*

Imprisoning Nabeel Rajab and scores of other activists has not stopped the Bahraini people from continuing their struggle for freedom, democracy and respect for human rights while the US government and its allies are continuing their hypocritical support of the al-Khalifa regime. As peace loving people we support the Bahraini people fight for human rights and freedom without the meddling of the US or any other foreign country.

Hands Off Nabeel Rajab! Free All Political Prisoners in Bahrain! US/UK, Saudi Arabia out of Bahrain!

Follow Azza Rojbi on Twitter:  
@Azza\_R14

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# Standing Rock Stands Solid & Strong Against Big Business, Degradation of Environment & Abuse of Indigenous Rights

*By Thomas Davies*

*"We are fighting the Dakota pipeline, but we're also fighting the whole system of violence. The whole system which has called us savages. Which has denied us our ability to be human - and we're responding to that by creating a community that has it's own values...When we have natural resource development which is unsustainable, which threatens the very life of human beings and the natural world, we say absolutely no, it's unacceptable." - Michelle Cook, Diné of the Walk Around Clan from Oak Springs, Arizona. Standing Rock legal advisor*

It's fair to say that no one really anticipated what is happening today at the Sacred Stone camp in Standing Rock, North Dakota. Thousands of indigenous and non-indigenous camp members trying to halt construction of a billion dollar oil pipeline have become a global symbol in the fight for indigenous self-determination, and against climate change and the unsustainable economic system forcing our entire population and planet towards the brink of destruction. If we take a closer look at the factors which led to the Standing Rock uprising, it's clear that the Liberal government in Canada and their oil company friends should be worried that the same is in store for them if they try and force these kinds of projects on us.

The camp began in April as a protest against the 3.8 billion dollar Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), which is planned to cross



the traditional and sacred territories of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation without their consent. It is also planned to carry 450,000 barrels-a-day of hydraulically fracked oil under the Missouri River and Ogallala Aquifer – which millions of people rely on for their drinking water.

While the camp had grown steadily, footage of bulldozers destroying ancient burial grounds while peaceful protesters were pepper sprayed and bitten by private security attack dogs burned the Standing Rock movement into the consciousness of people around the world. Many, like Fire Time Time, travelled long distances to participate and document the struggle.

Since then the camp, its profile, as well as the brutality subjected against it have continued to grow. In one Thursday at least 142 peaceful protestors were arrested, while many more suffered from the attacks of police. Private security firms are now playing a secondary role as video footage shows police forces from 8 different states moving in with riot gear against a newly established winter camp on the pipeline route. Snipers were positioned on tanks, tear gas, bean bag rounds and pepper spray were fired, people were clubbed, dragged, and tazered.

Medics were also attacked, and the National Nurses Union issued a damning statement:

*"Let's be clear; only one group came dressed for war this week: the police and armed guards. And while this is a peaceful resistance to a public health crisis, not war, nurses feel duty bound to publicly condemn those who came dressed for war. We condemn them for violating not only the rights and safety of the protectors (a violation under review by Amnesty International USA) , but also violating a basic, international law of humanity, even in times of actual war: medical facilities and medics themselves are not to be targeted."*

Unfortunately for the pipeline company and their police allies, their violence has only strengthened the resolve of those in the camp, and led to more awareness about the situation at Standing Rock. Despite the famously cold North Dakota winter setting in, people continue to join the camp. An

anonymous donor covered the 2.5 million dollars for all of the arrested to be released on bail, and online donations to the camp have topped 1 million dollars. When it was reported that police officers were using the Facebook geo-location "check-in"

feature to keep track of who was joining the camp, in a few days over 1 million people responded to a call to digitally "check in" at Standing Rock and confuse the authorities.

## Why It's so Necessary

Even conservative estimates by scientists show that if all of the existing oil wells and coal mines around the world are fully exploited, it would release enough CO2 into the atmosphere to take the planet above the 2 C temperature rise countries including Canada and the United States have agreed must be avoided to save the planet. We must limit consumption even more not to rise past the 1.5 C most agree is the real climate "point of no return".

So as drastic as it might sound to some, there really is no possibility to save the planet while building major fossil fuel infrastructure like the Dakota Access Pipeline. Luckily we now have many renewable energy options available, which could be improved upon if given the kind of focus corporations put on ramming new fossil fuel projects down our throats.

We are told that pipelines and the fossil fuel economy provide a lot of jobs. Well, tell that to indigenous nations in Canada and the United States. More than 1 in 4 indigenous people in the United States live in poverty, and their unemployment rate is almost double the national average. Meanwhile in Canada, the people of Attawapiskat live in crowded, freezing shacks while a De Beers diamond mine operates just 90 kilometres away makes huge profits.

All people in Canada has been suffering from our dependence on the fossil fuel centred economy. With low oil prices we've see companies lay off thousands and suicide rates skyrocket. Meanwhile, according to the International Monetary Fund, energy subsidies in Canada top an incredible \$34 billion each year in direct support to producers and uncollected tax on externalized costs.

It's no wonder more and more people are becoming more and more active in opposing these large fossil fuel projects in Standing Rock and around the world. They are literally destroying the planet, and aren't really a good





deal for most people to begin with! As the saying goes, “There are no jobs on a dead planet.

### Same Struggle

As people were being arrested in North Dakota, 99 young people in Ottawa were standing up for the environment and being arrested on Parliament Hill in Ottawa while calling on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to reject the Kinder Morgan tar sands pipeline. The government has said they will make an official announcement in December on whether they will approve the 890,000 barrels-a-day tar sands expansion project that definitely fits with the Dakota Access Pipeline in the “not possible if we want to keep living on this planet” category.



### Interview with **BigMike** of SAVAGE Family, an indigenous hip-hop crew from the Pacific Northwest at the Standing Rock Camp in North Dakota on September 10, 2016

*By Thomas Davies & Noah Fine*

**Big Mike:** This is Big Mike with SAVAGE Family – Standing Against Violent Adversaries and Genocidal Environments Forever Always Movement. We are out here at the Sacred Stone camp, standing up for our indigenous rights.

**FTT:** This is Thomas Davies and my co-fighter Noah Fine, from the Fire This Time Newspaper in Vancouver, Canada. We are out here doing the same. We are lucky to run into our brother here, and wanted to ask you, how long have you been up here at the camp?

**Big Mike:** I’ve been out here for about a week now.

**FTT:** How do you feel the mood is? How do you think things have been going?

In opposition to their adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, this government has already approved two major energy projects in BC opposed by

Indigenous peoples - the Pacific Northwest LNG project on Lelu Island and the Site C dam. This is hardly surprising if you take into account that oil companies and oil company lobby groups met with Federal Government officials almost 300 times this year.

If Trudeau thinks he can get away with approving the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion he might have a rude awakening. There were already over 100 people arrested for trying to disrupt Kinder Morgan’s coring operations on Burnaby Mountain – and the sense of urgency grows as the science piles up regarding climate change. A major mobilization has been called in Vancouver for

November 19, one month before the expected announcement, and organizations across Canada are discussing further coordinated actions.

We should also not underestimate the confidence everyone fighting for a sustainable planet has gained from seeing the strong, principled and united resistance against the Dakota Access Pipeline. The Standing Rock struggle has reenergized the global climate movement. It has given us a glimpse of what is possible if we stand up to big corporations, if we stand up to their friends in government and the violence of their police officers. The main demand of the November 19 mobilization in Vancouver is, “Stop Kinder Morgan. No Consent. No Pipeline!” Justin Trudeau will have to realize that we will not allow this pipeline to be built, but we are committed to building the just, sustainable and better world we know is possible.

**WE STAND WITH STANDING ROCK!**

**SYSTEM CHANGE NOT CLIMATE CHANGE!**

**STOP KINDER MORGAN. NO CONSENT NO PIPELINE!**

**Big Mike:** The moral is high. In dealing with the United States government and the racist local police force, you really have to be peaceful and calculated in how you deal with them legally. So, a lot of the elders and the tribal officials are heading up that situation. We are here to assist. We are here to support. We are here to pray. We are here to basically stop the pipeline.

**FTT:** When you first decided to come out here, what was the underlying motivation? Why did you think “right now, I need to be out here”?

**Big Mike:** It’s 2016 and they have fucking dogs biting natives. Where does that happen? You know, the world is looking at America like, you’re supposed to be this superpower yet you are treating your own indigenous people like this?

But really, it’s no surprise because they are all over the world killing indigenous people for natural resources. So, who are we? They will just try to run us over like they’ve been doing. They didn’t even have the proper permits, but yet, they were going to push the issue. If it wasn’t for people standing up, it would have never been brought to light.

**FTT:** You were talking about your own struggles as well, with the situation facing the Shasta Dam?

**Big Mike:** In California they are trying to raise the Shasta Dam nine feet, which will cover up the Winnemem Wintu’s sacred sites. They don’t care about indigenous people, they care about making money from the water. They have Crystal Geyser sucking up the water out of the water, selling it. They have no respect for the native land; they are not doing anything to respect the native land.

They said themselves that they own all the water in California and that they can do whatever they want with it. Well, guess what? We are going to stand for the water because without the water, without the river, without the sacred sites, we have nothing. It is the only that we have left after they killed about one million of us, a million plus.

**FTT:** We see the same issues of land, of water, or self-determination playing out all over this country, all over Canada. We are very lucky to get to meet people who are standing up, who are fighting back, and this camp is full of people. Thank you very much for taking the time for the interview. We are going to try to bring you up to Vancouver for the Hip Hop 4 Peace Festival. To all of our readers, please look Big Mike up.

**Big Mike:** Please look up the Winnemem Wintu and Shasta dam raise.\*

\* For more information visit with website of the Winnemem Wintu dedicated to their fight against the raising of the Shasta dam at: <http://www.winnememwintu.us/journey-to-justice/shasta-dam-raise/>

*continued from page 7*

Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Alicia Bárcena in a recent interview with the news agency Sputnik in which she said, “The country is not in a humanitarian crisis, definitely not, we must be clear. There is a shortage of certain products and political tension, but Venezuela still has many elements to be a vibrant country.”

### **US Hands Off Venezuela!**

On October 24, 2016, the Washington Post wrote yet another editorial calling for foreign intervention in Venezuela stating “The regime won’t change course unless it comes under far greater pressure, from the streets or from external sanctions. If it wishes to head off still greater turmoil in Venezuela, the United States should be coordinating tough international action.”

As if what the US government is doing already isn’t enough intervention. From trips to US Congress by leading members of the opposition, to e-mails from former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton showing US spying on Venezuelan state-owned companies, the fingerprints of the US government are all over the counter-revolutionary actions of the opposition. Through funding by US groups like the Agency for International Development (USAid), a paper trail is there too.

On top of this political and financial support for counter-revolution in Venezuela, the US government has also declared, in 2015 and again in 2016, that Venezuela “an unusual and extraordinary threat to US national security,” and imposed economic sanctions. These measures have hampered Venezuela’s ability to work with international and US financial institutions, greatly deepening the impact of the severe drop in oil prices on Venezuela’s economy.

### **Venezuela Needs Our Solidarity Now More Than Ever**

Today President Nicolás Maduro, the PSUV, and all of the forces that make up the Bolivarian Revolution are facing some of their biggest challenges yet. Although there is still much that can be done to bring full justice and equality to the majority of people in Venezuela, through mass organization and mobilization the Bolivarian Revolution continues to advance in the struggle for a better Venezuela and a better world. As the people of Venezuela continue to build their revolution, the most important thing that people living in imperialist countries can do is to get the pressure of US intervention and meddling off of their backs.

The struggle between revolution and counter-revolution in Venezuela has taken many forms. From an economic war to violent street demonstrations, to the latest attempt of the opposition in the National Assembly to declare the President of Venezuela unfit to rule, it is clear that the solidarity of people around the world that support the Bolivarian Revolution is needed now more than ever.

U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!  
No to U.S. Sanctions on Venezuela!  
Obama: Revoke the Decree!  
Viva Viva Venezuela!

*Follow Alison Bodine on Twitter:  
@Alisoncolette*

## **VANCOUVER SOLIDARITY WITH VENEZUELA CONTINUES TO GROW! VENEZUELA, WE ARE WITH YOU!**



*By Noah Fine*



Since the passing of former Venezuelan President and leader of the Bolivarian Revolution, Hugo Chávez, the Venezuelan right-wing and their U.S. allies have been working tirelessly to sabotage the gains made by the Venezuelan Government and people.

At no other time in the last 16 years of Bolivarian Revolution has the threat by the right-wing been so great to dispose of the revolutionary government now led by President Nicolás Maduro.

For this reason united action around the world is so necessary to come to the defence of the Bolivarian Revolution and its’ government who are struggling to carry on with the mission began by Chávez to better the lives of millions of Venezuelan people, especially the poor.

Since December of 2015 Fire This Time’s Venezuela Solidarity Campaign has held a monthly protest action and petition campaign against U.S. intervention in Venezuela, in defence of the sovereignty and self-determination of the people of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution.

On October 14th, 2016 dozens of supporters of the Venezuelan Revolution braved the pouring rain to protest U.S. intervention in Venezuela in front of the U.S. Consulate in Downtown Vancouver.

Loud chants of “U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!” could be heard throughout the area before the group posed for a picture under the U.S. Consulate sign.

The group then moved to the Vancouver Art Gallery, one of the busiest locations for foot traffic in Vancouver where they set up a table, tent and banners before approaching passers-by to sign the Fire This Time petition demanding an end to U.S. intervention in Venezuela.

Hundreds of people stopped to take photos, take some information, ask questions or sign the petition.

Coordinator of the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, Alison Bodine invited participants to continue joining in each month to express that in Vancouver as in every part of the world, solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution exists and needs to grow as the Venezuelan people continue to see heightened threats from the Venezuelan capitalist class and their U.S. backers.

As Venezuelan people continue to struggle for a better life, Fire This Time’s Venezuela Solidarity Campaign continues to state, “Venezuela, we are with you!”

U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!



# CANADIAN MINING COMPANIES IN LATIN AMERICA HAVE BLOOD ON THEIR HANDS

***A new report finds that the corporate social responsibility governing Canada's mining industry brings human rights abuses and death to Latin American communities.***

Canadian mining companies came under renewed criticism Monday for their role in dozens of deaths, hundreds of injuries, and their systemic criminalization of mostly nonviolent grassroots activists protesting their operations in Latin American countries over the past 15 years, a new report found. The report sheds further light on the notorious human rights and environmental track records of Canadian corporations extracting resources abroad.

Compiled by the Toronto-based Justice and Corporate Accountability Project at York University's Osgoode Hall Law School, the report documents incidents in over a dozen countries by 28 Canadian mining giants, including big names like Barrick Gold, Goldcorp and Tahoe Resources that have repeatedly garnered criticism for damning



*Anglelica Choc widow of Adolfo Ich Chaman, an anti-mining activist killed by HudBay security contractors, Guatemala, 2010*

reports of human rights violations and environmental destruction at their mines. It also calls attention to the urgent need for greater accountability, both from corporations and the Canadian government, to treat reports of violence with the gravity they warrant.

In total, the "The 'Canada Brand.' Violence and Canadian Mining Companies in Latin America" documents 44 deaths—30 of which are described as clearly "targeted"—across 11 countries and 403 injuries—363 of which happened during protests and other confrontations—across 13 different countries, between 2000 and 2015.

It also records 709 cases of criminalization over the same period against opponents of mining activities, including arrests, charges, formal complaints and other litigation targeting activists and community leaders.

The report lays bare differences in the kinds of violence communities face at the hands of Canadian mining corporations in different countries. Guatemala—home to contentious and controversy-embroiled mines like

Tahoe Resources' Escobal silver mine and Goldcorp's Marlin gold mine—suffered the most deaths with 12 fatalities linked to four Canadian mining projects. Mexico, Colombia, and Peru followed with eight, six, five and four deaths, respectively, in connection with one or more Canadian mining projects.

On the other hand, three Canadian projects associated with violence in Argentina—home to Barrick Gold's disputed Veladero mine—did not have blood on their hands with the deaths of activists, but clearly led in the number of instances of arrests, charges and detention of anti-mining activists with a total of 114 such cases. Honduras, Guatemala, Panama and Peru followed with 85, 71, 70 and 56 cases of criminalization tied to two or more projects.

Meanwhile, Mexico was home to the largest number of Canadian mining projects linked to reports of violence and repression, with a total of six such mines.

What's more, the researchers found that Canadian companies listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange systematically exclude violent incidents from their required reporting. Human rights groups have used these reporting requirements in the past to launch complaints against mining corporations based on the argument that their negligent reporting is misleading for investors.

The actual extent of violence and repression at Canadian mines in Latin America is likely much higher than what is detailed in the report, since the study only documented cases that could be corroborated by two independent sources. The authors note that additional reports of deaths, injuries, and other abuses also surfaced during the investigation, but could not be included based on the methodology. The report acknowledges that the number of cases of sexual violence most likely do not reflect the reality due to the fact that such abuses are chronically underreported. The authors also note that other kinds of human rights abuses suffered as a result of Canadian mining were excluded from the study.

"We were not able to include death threats, deliberate burning of crops and property destruction, forced displacement, reported assassination attempts without reported injury, illness from environmental contamination, or psychological trauma from any of the violence due to the extensive resources required to

document these incidents," reads the executive summary.

Despite being a partial picture, the authors stress that the report provides evidence of Canadian mining companies direct involvement in violence in Latin America and express hope that the study can act as a call to action for discussion at how to tighten regulations on the industry.

The report is far from the first time the Canadian mining industry has been thrust into the spotlight for its rampant abuses. In fact, a number of high-profile international bodies—including four United Nations bodies and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights—have condemned the systematic abuses committed at the hands of Canadian companies, urging the Canadian government to reform its policy of industry self-regulation in favor of more strict requirements for extractive companies. Earlier this year, over 180 organizations from across Latin America penned a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau demanding the government act in the face of runaway abuses by Canadian mining companies.

The barrage of criticism, though, has done little to stem the human rights violations at the hands of an industry that enjoys voluntary and non-enforceable "corporate social responsibility" codes governing its business practices.



*Yolanda Oqueli, anti-mining activist protesting the Radius Gold, Inc El Tambor mine, Guatemala, 2014*

Nevertheless, local plaintiffs impacted by human rights abuses and environmental destruction in Latin American countries are increasingly seeking recourse in Canadian courts. As the new report highlights, though, it's a David vs. Goliath battle.

teleSUR, October 24 2016  
<http://www.telesur.tv.net/english/>



# FROM NORTH DAKOTA TO NORTHERN BC

WE SAY: PEOPLE & PLANET  
BEFORE PIPELINES & PLUNDER!  
**#NODAPL #STOPKINDERMORGAN**







# The World Stands With Cuba!

## CUBA WON THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY AGAINST U.S. BLOCKADE

By Tamara Hansen

On October 26, 2016 the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) held its 25<sup>th</sup> annual vote on the U.S. Blockade on Cuba. For the twenty-fifth year in a row the world emphatically condemned this unjust American policy towards Cuba. However, this year for the first time, not a single country voted to keep the blockade. The United States abstained, along with its most staunch ally Israel. The vote was 191 countries in favor of ending the blockade, with 2 countries abstaining and 0 votes against; no countries were absent for the vote. This was indeed a historical break through and victory for Cuba.

### U.S. Imperialist Bully against Cuba

The blockade on Cuba was officially imposed by U.S. President Kennedy in 1962. This policy was meant to create economic hardship for the people and government of Cuba, after the Cubans had the audacity to kick out the U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista, a U.S. puppet, with their popular revolution in 1959. The U.S. government was unhappy that the new revolutionary government of Cuba, led by Fidel Castro, was promising land to landless tenant farmers, education, health and jobs. None of these gains for the Cuban people were in the interest of the U.S. government and its corporations. Kennedy and the U.S. hoped that the blockade on Cuba (or embargo, as they call it) would starve the people and their government into submission.

### Resistance, Dignity and Progress

Of course, many years passed and while the blockade has indeed harmed Cuba's economy, it never succeeded in its goal of overthrowing the Cuban revolution. However, the blockade became a much

bigger obstacle for Cuba after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Socialist Block, when Cuba lost its most important trading partners. The U.S. government's response was to tighten the blockade with several new measures throughout the 1990s, effectively doubling-down on their failed policy. Cuba declared this period of economic challenges, the "Special Period", it was a time of deep economic woes in Cuba, with the average Cuban losing about 20 lbs; due to lack of food, needing to walk and bike everywhere and other difficulties. Yet the people of Cuba did not abandon their revolution, which had delivered on its promises of jobs, universal healthcare, education and dignity. Throughout the Special Period, Cubans continued fighting against the blockade – in the streets, popular culture, international events and especially the resolution they brought every year to the United Nations General Assembly asking the world to stand with them against the U.S. imperialist bully. In 1992, when the first resolution was brought to the UNGA, Cuba won the vote, but not as decisively as this year. The results in 1992 were: 59 votes in favor of ending the blockade, 3 against, 71 abstentions and 46 countries were absent for the vote.

### Reestablishment of Diplomatic Relations

Things began changing in a major way on December 17, 2014 when U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro announced the reestablishment of formal diplomatic ties between their two countries. Obama even made statements to the press saying he wanted to end the blockade on Cuba, however the power to do so rests not only in his hands, but also that of the U.S. Congress. Nevertheless, when it came time for the 2015 UNGA vote on the blockade, the Obama

administration voted against ending the blockade. This year, an election year in the U.S., and Obama's last UNGA as president, there was a change: the U.S. government decided to abstain.

Unfortunately Obama still has not used all of the executive powers at his disposal as U.S. president to remove many aspects of the blockade, and the U.S. government continues to prosecute those it sees breaking the laws of the blockade on Cuba. The reason for the abstention is not really because the U.S. understands that its policy has been morally bankrupt and against the right of Cuba to self-determination. Instead, their decision to abstain is based on the fact that the U.S. policy of blockading Cuba has exposed America's hypocrisy, and bullying tactics to the world. In her remarks leading up to the vote on October 26, 2016, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Powers, explained, "the resolution voted on today is a perfect example of why the U.S. policy of isolation toward Cuba was not working – or worse, how it was actually undermining the very goals it set out to achieve. Instead of isolating Cuba, as President Obama has repeatedly said, our policy isolated the United States. Including right here at the United Nations."

### U.S. Hypocrisy Exposed

Powers then went on to attack what they call human rights abuses in Cuba, from political prisoners to freedom of speech. However Powers then also had to add, "Let me be among the first to acknowledge – as our Cuban counterparts often point out – that the United States has work to do in fulfilling these rights for our own citizens. And we know that at times in our history, U.S. leaders and citizens used the pretext of promoting democracy



and human rights in the region to justify actions that have left a deep legacy of mistrust. We recognize that our history, in which there is so much that makes us proud, also gives us ample reason to be humble.” How the tables have turned, with the biggest bully in the world, having to choke down some humble pie on the world stage. Obviously the Obama administration feels exposed. They can no longer hide, everyone is watching what is happening in the United States: from police repression of the peaceful Indigenous movement against the North Dakota Access Pipeline; to police murder and the Black Live Matter movement; to the November presidential election featuring two of the most detested candidates in recent history running at the head of their two major parties.

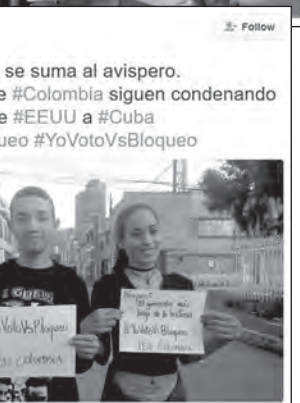
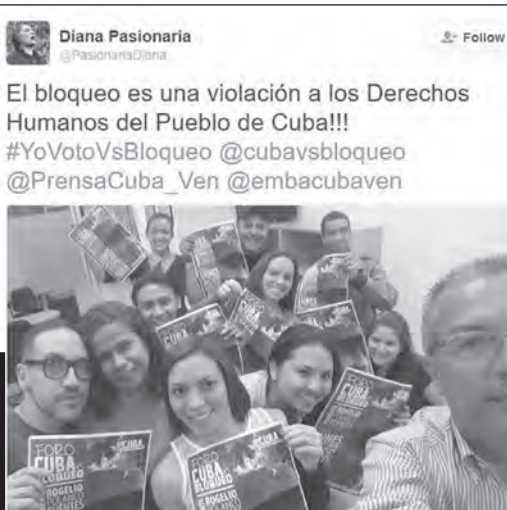
### Cuba fights back!

So for 25 years Cuba has been winning the vote at the United Nations with a larger and larger margin each year. Convincing more countries to stand up against U.S. bullying and to take a stance with Cuba to end this unjust economic policy. In the following special section in Fire This Time Volume 10 Issue 11, you will learn more about the impacts of the Blockade on Cuba as well as the struggle to end the U.S. Blockade on Cuba: in Canada, in Cuba and around the world!

The United States’ own words demonstrate that international pressure does matter. Let’s continue our struggle to stop this imperialist bully in its tracks. Let’s stand with the people of Cuba and demand an immediate end to ALL aspects of the U.S. government’s criminal blockade on Cuba! United, we will win!

Follow Tamara Hansen on Twitter:  
@THans01

Cuba, Venezuela, Vietnam, Canada, Zimbabwe, Colombia tweet against the blockade!



worldwide social media against the blockade!







*"We will struggle to build a sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable nation."*

- Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs



October 2016. Left to right: Bruno Rodríguez speaks at the UN; Cuban students protest the blockade in Havana; Samantha Powers, U.S. Ambassador to the UN during UN vote on the blockade against Cuba.



unchanged.

STATEMENT BY H.E. Mr. BRUNO RODRÍGUEZ PARRILLA, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA, ON AGENDA ITEM 39, "NECESSITY OF ENDING THE ECONOMIC, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL EMBARGO IMPOSED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AGAINST CUBA", AT THE SEVENTY FIRST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY. NEW YORK, OCTOBER 26, 2016.

Mr. President;

Excellencies, Permanent Representatives;

Delegates:

It's been almost two years since President Barack Obama announced his willingness to use his executive powers and engage the US Congress with the purpose of lifting the blockade against Cuba.

During this period, the three Cuban anti-terrorists returned to their homeland; the unjustifiable inclusion of Cuba in the so called list of States sponsoring international terrorism was abrogated; diplomatic relations were re-established between the two countries and embassies were re-opened in the respective capitals; President Obama, the Secretary of State and other members of the US government's cabinet, including Senators, Representatives and personalities of broad sectors of the American society visited Havana.

There is no doubt that progress has been made in terms of dialogue and cooperation in areas of common interest; and a dozen agreements rendering reciprocal benefits have been signed.

However, the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba persists, seriously

harming the Cuban people and impairing the country's economic development.

Given its marked extraterritorial character, the blockade also affects directly all the UN member States.

The US President, as well as other high officials, has described it as obsolete; useless to advance the US interests; a failed, nonsensical and unviable policy; a burden to all citizens that harms the Cuban people and plunges the United States into isolation which should be lifted.

However, most of the executive regulations as well as the laws that establish the blockade are still in force and are fully implemented by the US government agencies.

We recognize that the executive measures adopted by the US Government have been positive steps, but with a very limited scope and effect.

The actions taken in the area of telecommunications pursue openly declared political and interventionist objectives, but they show how broad the faculties of the President are. If he wished, he could authorize commercial operations, investments and the granting of private credits in all sectors of the Cuban economy.

Those measures related to commercial operations with small private businesses, also inspired by expressed political motivations, will not work at a substantial scale as long as the economic organization and commercial structures of Cuba's foreign trade are not taken into account. Nevertheless, they show that in the area of trade, progress could also be made, even if the blockade laws remain

Some US spokespersons have stated that the Cuban system is the one that hinders the implementation of such measures. They know this is not true. The blockade laws are the ones that condition today's realities.

Too well known and notorious is the fact that the President of the United States has ample executive prerogatives - which he has not fully used, as he could still do- to substantially modify the practical implementation of the blockade and its economic and humanitarian impact.

Only 12 days ago, the Treasury and Commerce Departments announced new measures which, although positive, have a very limited scope. Most of them are aimed at expanding previously authorized transactions, and rather than benefitting Cuba and the Cuban people, they favor the United States.

There is one funny piece of news: From now on, US citizens who are authorized by their government to visit Cuba, or those who travel to other countries, will be allowed to buy and take with them as part of their personal luggage, Cuban products with no limit in value, including rum and cigars. However, the exports of those products to the United States continue to be banned.

Unless specific licenses are issued, the new measures do not allow either for US investments or joint ventures in our country, not even for the production of Cuban pharmaceutical or biotech products, whose marketing and distribution in the US have been authorized -if they receive approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

US exports to Cuba have not expanded beyond the previously authorized limited sales which exclude the key sectors of the Cuban economy; nor have any new changes been announced in the financial sector, which

means that Cuban banking institutions are still not allowed to open correspondent accounts in US financial institutions.

The US Congress, for its part, has not approved any of the 20 amendments or bills that, with a bipartisan support, are intended to eliminate some of the restrictions imposed by the blockade or that policy as a whole. Quite on the contrary, more than 50 legislative initiatives have been introduced that threaten to reinforce some fundamental aspects of the implementation of the blockade; prevent the President from approving new executive measures or obstruct the implementation of those already approved. Neither has there been any particular effort made by the government in this regard.

It is necessary, therefore, to judge by the facts.

Mr. President:

The human damages caused by the blockade are incalculable. There isn't any Cuban family or sector in our country that has not suffered from its effects. Its impact has been felt in the areas of health; education; food; services; commodity prices; salaries and pensions.

The imposition of discriminatory and onerous conditions, together with the dissuasive effects of the blockade, restricts the purchases of food as well as pharmaceuticals, reagents, spare parts for medical equipment and instruments - among other products- in the US market.

The US company Medtronic was unable to sign contracts with Cuban companies for the sale of deep brain stimulators to treat Cuban patients suffering from Parkinson's disease and other neurological disorders on account of the restrictions imposed by the blockade.

Neither was it possible for the multinational SIGMA-ALDRICH to supply the protection means or the chemical and biotech products ordered by the Cuban company FARMACUBA for the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals in Cuba.

In May this year, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission of the United States notified the branch office of the German company Eckert and Ziegler in that country that it would deny any license application to supply the Dutch company Philips with the calibration sources required by a medical equipment that was purchased by the Institute of Oncology of Cuba in 2013, thus affecting a service that is vital for cancer patients.

On September 26 last, the Italian medical equipment supplier EMILDUE notified the Cuban company MEDICUBA that the US company Boston Scientific Corporation (BSC) refused to sell to it a COSMAN radiofrequency generator used in cancer diagnosis.

The blockade also affects the interests of the

US citizens themselves, who could benefit from various services that are offered in Cuba, among them the health services.

During the tragic moments of the Ebola virus epidemic in western Africa, the deployment of Cuban medical assistance was hampered by the refusal of the British Standard Chartered Bank to make transfers between the World Health Organization and the brigades of Cuban doctors who risked their lives by being in direct contact with patients, and even under such extreme circumstances, the issuance of specific licenses by the Treasury Department was required. The branch office of that bank in Uganda has just closed the private accounts of the Cuban health workers in that country; and the branch office of Barclays Bank, which is also British, prevents them from making transfers to Cuba.

The same occurs with the Cuban cooperation personnel working in other countries in the area of education.

In August, 2016, due to the refusal of correspondent banks Commerzbank, from Germany, and KBC Bank, from Belgium, the money transfers associated to the maternal and child care and ophthalmological services offered in Algeria could not materialize.

By means of the shameful "Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program" designed for the Cuban health staff working in other countries, the United States attempts to impede medical cooperation and deprive those peoples and our own from highly qualified and indispensable human resources.

Last month, several banks based in Pakistan refused to open a letter of credit requested by a company of that country for the purchase of 100 thousand vaccines against Hepatitis B, on the grounds that Cuba was a country under the US sanction system.

Still in force is a legal ban that prevents US citizens from freely traveling to Cuba, which is a violation of their civil liberties and rights, although travels have been facilitated through general licenses only in the case of the twelve categories that were legally authorized by that country.

Any US citizen would be under threat of a 100 thousand dollar fine for traveling to Cuba with several companions.

The blockade continues to be a massive, flagrant and systematic violation of the human rights of all Cuban men and women and qualifies as an act of genocide pursuant to the Geneva Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948. It is also an obstacle to international humanitarian cooperation.

Mr. President:

Between April, 2015, and March, 2016, the economic damages caused to Cuba directly by the blockade were worth more than 4.680 billion dollars at current prices, according to rigorous, prudent and conservative calculations.

The damages accumulated for almost six decades as a result of the implementation of this genocidal policy amount to 753.688 billion dollars, taking into account the depreciation of gold. At current prices, this figure is equivalent to more than 125 billion dollars.

The blockade is the main obstacle to the economic and social development of our people.

It is a violation of International Law, the UN Charter and the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, which was signed by the Heads of State and Government of that region in January, 2014. Its extraterritorial implementation adds a new dimension to its character as a violation of international law.

The announcement made by the US Treasury Department this March allowing my country to use American dollars in its international transactions was good news, but so far Cuba has not been able to make payments or cash deposits in that currency due to the fines that have been imposed and the intimidating effects of the blockade. The ceasing of operations, the closing of Cuban bank accounts abroad, the denial of credits and the refusal to make transfers to and from Cuba in third countries have also increased.

The Dutch bank Rabobank and the Italian bank Unicredit Banca Di Roma have surprisingly refused to accept Cuban transactions in Euros.

Transfers in currencies other than the US dollar that are made to pay Cuba's membership dues to some international bodies -such as the Association of Caribbean States and the Inter-Parliamentary Union-, have been hindered by non-US banks in third countries.

In 2016, several bank accounts and payments belonging to embassies and consulates; tourism and travel agencies; the Cuban airline Cubana de Aviación; diplomats; international messaging and package delivery services and NGOs were closed and frozen respectively because of their links with Cuba.



*continued on page 28*





*"Lucharemos  
por construir una Nación  
soberana, independiente, socialista,  
democrática, próspera y sostenible."*

- Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla

El Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Cuba

## \* EN ESPAÑOL \*

DISCURSO DEL MINISTRO DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE CUBA, BRUNO RODRÍGUEZ PARRILLA, EN LA PRESENTACIÓN DEL PROYECTO DE RESOLUCIÓN "NECESIDAD DE PONER FIN AL BLOQUEO ECONÓMICO, COMERCIAL Y FINANCIERO IMPUESTO POR LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA CONTRA CUBA", ANTE LA ASAMBLEA GENERAL DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS, NUEVA YORK, 26 DE OCTUBRE DE 2016.

Señor Presidente;

Excelentísimos Señores Representantes Permanentes;

Señoras y Señores Delegados:

Han transcurrido casi dos años desde que el presidente Barack Obama anunciara su disposición a emplear sus facultades ejecutivas y a trabajar con el Congreso con el objetivo de levantar el bloqueo a Cuba.

En este período se produjo el regreso de los tres luchadores antiterroristas cubanos, la eliminación de la injustificable inclusión de Cuba en la llamada lista de Estados patrocinadores del terrorismo internacional, el restablecimiento de las relaciones diplomáticas y la reapertura de embajadas en las respectivas capitales; la visita a La Habana del Presidente de los Estados Unidos, del Secretario de Estado y otros miembros del Gabinete, junto a decenas de senadores, representantes y personalidades de amplios sectores.

Sin dudas, se han registrado avances en el diálogo y la cooperación en temas de interés común y se firmaron una docena de acuerdos que reportan los beneficios recíprocos. Ahora acaba de anunciarse el voto de los Estados Unidos en abstención sobre este Proyecto de Resolución.

Sin embargo, el bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero persiste, provoca daños al pueblo cubano y obstaculiza el desarrollo económico del país.

Por su marcado carácter extraterritorial, el bloqueo también afecta directamente a todos los Estados miembros de las Naciones Unidas.

El mandatario estadounidense y otros altos funcionarios lo han calificado de obsoleto, inútil para hacer avanzar los intereses estadounidenses, fallido, sin sentido, inviable, de ser una carga para los ciudadanos, que daña al pueblo cubano y provoca aislamiento a Estados Unidos y el llamado a que sea levantado.

Ha tomado 24 años la rectificación del voto en solitario de los Estados Unidos de América en esta sala. Han sido 24 años, como ha dicho la embajadora Samantha Power, de aislamiento y fracaso. Cincuenta y ocho años de resistencia heroica de nuestro pueblo están en el fondo de lo que está ocurriendo. Pienso en este momento en mi pueblo, en Fidel y en Raúl, en los jóvenes cubanos herederos de esta larga lucha gloriosa.

Algunos me preguntaban por qué presentar otra vez esta Resolución a la Asamblea General. No puede subestimarse en modo alguno el poderoso mensaje político y ético que esta Asamblea envía a los pueblos del mundo. La verdad siempre termina por abrirse paso. La justicia termina por imponerse. El voto en abstención anunciado constituye seguramente un paso positivo en el futuro de mejoramiento de las relaciones entre los Estados Unidos y Cuba. Agradezco las palabras y los esfuerzos de la embajadora Samantha Power.

Sin embargo, la mayoría de las regulaciones ejecutivas y las leyes que establecen el bloqueo permanecen vigentes y son aplicadas con rigor hasta este minuto por las agencias del gobierno estadounidense.

Reconocemos que las medidas ejecutivas adoptadas por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos constituyen pasos positivos, pero de muy limitado efecto y alcance.

Las referidas al sector de las telecomunicaciones tienen, lamentablemente, declarados propósitos políticos e injerencistas, pero demuestran cuán amplias son las facultades del Presidente, quien podría

mañana, si quisiera, autorizar operaciones comerciales, créditos privados e inversiones en todos los sectores de la economía.

Las medidas relativas a operaciones comerciales con pequeños negocios privados, también de manera infortunada con expresas motivaciones políticas, no funcionarán en escala apreciable mientras no se tengan en cuenta la organización económica y las estructuras del comercio exterior cubano. No obstante, también demuestran que en el ámbito del comercio podría avanzarse, aun en el caso de que las leyes del bloqueo permanecieran sin modificación.

Algunos voceros estadounidenses han expresado que el ordenamiento cubano dificulta la aplicación de dichas medidas. Ellos saben que no es cierto. Es el conjunto del bloqueo el que determina la realidad actual.

Es notorio y conocido que el Presidente de los Estados Unidos posee amplias prerrogativas ejecutivas que no ha empleado, como aún podría, para modificar sustancialmente la aplicación práctica del bloqueo y su impacto humanitario y económico.

¿Significa este cambio de voto que las utilizará con determinación?

Hace solo 12 días, los departamentos de Tesoro y Comercio anunciaron nuevas medidas, que aunque positivas, tienen muy limitado alcance. En su mayoría están dirigidas a ampliar transacciones autorizadas anteriormente y más que beneficiar a Cuba y al pueblo cubano, favorecen a los Estados Unidos.

Una noticia simpática: a partir de ahora, los ciudadanos estadounidenses que tengan autorización de su gobierno para visitar a Cuba, o que viajen a otros países, podrán comprar y llevar como parte de su equipaje personal, productos cubanos sin límite de valor, incluyendo ron y tabaco, todos los que quepan en su equipaje personal. Sin embargo, continúan prohibidas las exportaciones de esos productos a los Estados Unidos. ¿Por qué?

Salvo emisión de licencias específicas, las nuevas medidas tampoco permiten inversiones estadounidenses en nuestro país, ni empresas mixtas, ni créditos, siquiera para la producción farmacéutica y biotecnológica cubana, cuya comercialización y distribución en los Estados Unidos ha sido felizmente autorizada, siempre y cuando reciban la aprobación de la Agencia de Medicinas y Alimentos.

No se amplían tampoco las exportaciones de los Estados Unidos a Cuba, más allá de las limitadas ventas autorizadas anteriormente, que excluyen a los sectores clave de la economía cubana, ni se anunciaron tampoco otros cambios en el área financiera, por lo que se mantiene la prohibición a la apertura de cuentas corresponsales de entidades bancarias cubanas en instituciones similares estadounidenses.

Por su parte, el Congreso estadounidense no ha aprobado ninguna de las 20 enmiendas o iniciativas legislativas que, con apoyo bipartidista, han propuesto eliminar algunas restricciones del bloqueo o incluso la totalidad de esta política. Por el contrario, se han presentado más de 50 iniciativas legislativas que amenazan con reforzar aspectos fundamentales de la aplicación del bloqueo, impedir al Presidente la aprobación de nuevas medidas ejecutivas o la implementación de las ya adoptadas. Tampoco se han conocido esfuerzos específicos del gobierno en este sentido.

Es necesario, por tanto, juzgar por los hechos. Lo importante y concreto es el desmontaje del bloqueo, más que los discursos, las declaraciones de prensa o incluso el voto de una delegación en esta sala. Repito, es necesario juzgar por los hechos.

Señor Presidente:

Son incalculables los daños humanos producidos por el bloqueo. No hay familia

cubana ni sector en el país que no sufra sus efectos: en la salud, la educación, la alimentación, en los servicios, los precios de los productos, en los salarios y las pensiones.

La imposición de condiciones discriminatorias y onerosas, unida a los efectos disuasivos del bloqueo, restringe las compras de alimentos y la adquisición en el mercado estadounidense de medicamentos, reactivos, piezas de repuesto para equipos e instrumental médicos y otros.

La empresa estadounidense Medtronic no pudo establecer contratos con empresas cubanas para la venta de estimuladores cerebrales profundos, que servirían para el tratamiento de los pacientes cubanos con enfermedad de Parkinson y otros trastornos neurológicos, alegando muy recientemente las restricciones del bloqueo.

Tampoco le fue posible a la multinacional SIGMA ALDRICH proveer los medios de protección y productos químicos y biotecnológicos solicitados por la empresa cubana FARMACUBA, para la elaboración de medicamentos en el país.

En mayo de este año, la Comisión Regulatoria Nuclear de los Estados Unidos notificó a la sucursal en ese país de la compañía alemana Eckert and Ziegler, que se denegaría la solicitud de licencia para proveer a la compañía holandesa Philips, la fuente de calibración para un equipo médico adquirido por el Instituto de Oncología de Cuba en 2013, afectando un servicio vital para pacientes con cáncer.

El pasado 26 de septiembre, el proveedor italiano de equipos médicos EMILDUE notificó a la empresa cubana MEDICUBA que la compañía estadounidense Boston Scientific Corporation (BSC), se negaba a venderle un generador de radiofrecuencia marca COSMAN, para el diagnóstico de cáncer.

El bloqueo afecta, además, los intereses de los propios ciudadanos estadounidenses, quienes pudieran beneficiarse de varios servicios en Cuba, entre ellos, los de salud.

Agradezco y comparto las emotivas palabras de la embajadora Samantha Power sobre el caso emblemático, simbólico, del doctor Félix Báez Sarria. Es un ejemplo de todo lo que podría hacerse cuando prevalece

la cooperación internacional.

Sin embargo, no podría callar que en los momentos trágicos de la epidemia de ébola en África Occidental el despliegue de ayuda médica cubana fue obstaculizado por la negativa del británico Standard Chartered Bank a realizar transferencias entre

la Organización Mundial de la Salud y las brigadas de médicos cubanos que integraba el doctor Báez Sarria y que arriesgaban sus vidas en el contacto directo con los pacientes, lo que requirió, aun en esas condiciones extremas, licencias específicas del Departamento del Tesoro. La sucursal en Uganda de este banco acaba de cerrar las cuentas personales de los trabajadores de la salud cubanos en ese país y la filial del también británico Barclays Bank les impide hacer transferencias a Cuba.

Ocurre lo mismo con el personal cubano de cooperación en el sector educacional en otros países.

Son ejemplos que demuestran la complejidad de la realidad entre los Estados Unidos y Cuba, pero es, sin lugar a dudas, alentador el enfoque realizado esta mañana. Con el cambio de voto de Estados Unidos podría preguntarse: ¿Cesarán estas prácticas?

En agosto de 2016, no se pudieron efectuar las transferencias asociadas a los servicios materno-infantil y oftalmológico prestados en Argelia, ante la negativa de los bancos corresponsales, el alemán Commerzbank y el belga KBC Bank.

Mediante el vergonzoso “Programa de Parole para el Personal Médico Cubano” que labora en otros países, Estados Unidos intenta impedir la cooperación médica y privarlos a ellos y a nosotros de indispensables recursos humanos altamente calificados.

El mes pasado, bancos radicados en Paquistán se negaron a abrir una carta de crédito solicitada por una compañía de ese país para la compra de 100 mil vacunas contra la Hepatitis B, por ser Cuba un país bajo sanciones de los Estados Unidos.

Permanece vigente la prohibición legal a los ciudadanos estadounidenses de viajar libremente a Cuba, lo que es una violación de sus derechos y libertades civiles, aunque se han facilitado los viajes, bajo licencias generales, solo en las 12 categorías autorizadas por la ley de ese país.



Bicicletada contra el bloqueo en Holguin, Cuba, 26 de octubre, 2016

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There is still a prohibition on foreign vessels touching Cuban ports, whereby they will not be allowed to touch US ports for a period of 180 days if they carry goods whose use is considered by the US Department of Commerce as allegedly dual or high tech equipment, which

creates contracting difficulties and increases freight and insurance costs.

This year, OFAC imposed heavy fines on the French company CGG Services S.A. for supplying inputs used in oil and gas prospecting in Cuba.

In January the US company WATG Holdings Inc. was fined because its branch office in the United Kingdom had worked in the design of a hotel in Cuba.

The ASDA supermarkets in the United Kingdom cancelled the sale of all Cuban products or by-products.

When trying to access from Cuba the website of the Norton division of the company Symantec, which supplies services to block and eliminate malicious software, a warning pops up which reads as follows: "Under the US applicable laws, we are unable to process your request."

Many others respond that "the user has no permit to get the address of an Internet site from this server"; or simply "access denied".

The decision of the Court of First Instance of the German city of Dortmund against the US company PayPal for blocking an account related to a concert offered by Cuban artists was significant, thus making all the more notorious the fact that national or antidote laws are not invoked in Europe against any violation of its sovereignty that might result from the implementation of the blockade.

There are other causes, in addition to the blockade, that determine our economic difficulties, such as the unjust international economic order; the global crisis; the historical distortions and structural weaknesses of underdevelopment; the high dependence on energy and food imports; the effects of climate change and natural disasters; and also –and we do not hide it– our own mistakes. Both our people and government are struggling very hard to overcome this reality.

Mr. President:

On April 17, 2016, President Raúl Castro Ruz

stated: "We have the will to develop a respectful dialogue and build a new type of relation with the United States, as never before has existed between the two countries, because we are convinced that it can only bring mutual benefits."

And on September 17 last, he added: "We ratify our will to have a relation of civilized coexistence with the United States, but Cuba will not give up one of its principles or make concessions inherent in its sovereignty and independence."

Looking back in history, the US Government attempted, first of all, the annexation of Cuba and, failing that, to exert its domination on the country. Upon the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, it pursued to create "disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship...denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government."

While the Presidential Policy Directive published on October 14 affirms that the US Government recognizes "Cuba's sovereignty and self-determination" and that "it is up to the Cuban people to make their own choices about their future", its deceitful language does not hide the purpose of altering the constitutional order and bring about changes in the economic, political social and cultural system of Cuba; nor does it hide the intention to continue to implement interventionist programs that serve the US interests and involve specific sectors of the Cuban society.

They say they are not seeking to impose "regime change on Cuba", but admit that "we will support Cuba's emerging...civil society and encourage partners and nongovernmental actors to join us in advocating for reforms. While remaining committed to supporting democratic activists ... we will also engage community leaders, bloggers, activists, and other social issue leaders who can contribute to Cuba's internal dialogue on civic participation." They also point out that they will maintain "our democracy and broadcasting programs, while protecting our interests and assets, such as the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station... The United States Government has no intention to alter the existing lease treaty and other related

UN VOTES 1992   2016 Resolution against the Blockade					
YEAR	IN FAVOUR	AGAINST	ABSTENTIONS	ABSENCES	COUNTRIES AGAINST
1992	59	3	71	46	U.S.   Israel   Romania
1993	88	4	57	35	U.S.   Israel   Albania   Paraguay
1994	101	2	48	33	U.S.   Israel
1995	117	3	38	27	U.S.   Israel   Uzbekistan
1996	137	3	25	20	U.S.   Israel   Uzbekistan
1997	143	3	17	22	U.S.   Israel   Uzbekistan
1998	157	2	12	14	U.S.   Israel
1999	155	2	8	23	U.S.   Israel
2000	167	3	4	15	U.S.   Israel   Marshall Islands
2001	167	3	3	16	U.S.   Israel   Marshall Islands
2002	173	3	4	11	U.S.   Israel   Marshall Islands
2003	179	3	2	7	U.S.   Israel   Marshall Islands
2004	179	4	7	7	U.S.   Israel   Palau   Marshall Islands
2005	182	4	1	4	U.S.   Israel   Palau   Marshall Islands
2006	186	4	1	-	U.S.   Israel   Palau   Marshall Islands
2007	184	4	1	-	U.S.   Israel   Palau   Marshall Islands
2008	185	3	2	-	U.S.   Israel   Palau
2009	187	3	2	-	U.S.   Israel   Palau
2010	187	2	3	-	U.S.   Israel
2011	186	2	3	2	U.S.   Israel
2012	188	3	2	-	U.S.   Israel   Palau
2013	188	2	3	-	U.S.   Israel
2014	188	2	3	-	U.S.   Israel
2015	191	2	0	-	U.S.   Israel
2016	191	0	2	-	-

arrangements."

Upon introducing the Directive, it was said: "we cannot simply stand back and wait for Cuba to change."

The Directive states that Cuba "remains in default to the United States Government on pre-Cuban revolution bilateral debts."

They should understand that we are already free, precisely because in 1959 we rid ourselves of the US imperialism and the dictatorship it imposed on us.

George W. Bush's "Initiative for a New Cuba" of May 19, 2002, which intended to condition a relaxation of the travel and trade bans to internal political and economic changes, was responded to by Cubans on June 26 of that same year with eight million signatures in support of the Constitutional amendment which proclaims the irrevocable character of socialism in Cuba.

It would be worthwhile acknowledging that changing Cuba is an issue that only pertains to the sovereignty of Cubans, and Cuba is a truly independent country. It is so because it achieved its independence on its own, and has defended and will continue to defend it at the price of the greatest sacrifices and risks.

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Un ciudadano estadounidense está bajo amenaza de ser multado por cien mil dólares, por haber viajado a Cuba con varios acompañantes.

El bloqueo sigue siendo una violación masiva, flagrante y sistemática de los derechos humanos de todas las cubanas y cubanos y califica como acto de genocidio a tenor de la Convención para la Prevención y Sanción del Delito de Genocidio de 1948. Es un obstáculo para la cooperación internacional en áreas humanitarias.

Entre abril de 2015 y marzo de 2016, los daños económicos directos provocados a Cuba por el bloqueo ascendieron a 4 mil 680 millones de dólares a precios corrientes, calculados con todo rigor y de manera prudente y conservadora.

Los daños acumulados durante casi seis décadas alcanzan la cifra de 753 mil 688 millones de dólares, tomando en cuenta la depreciación del oro. A precios corrientes, equivalen a algo más de 125 mil millones de dólares.

El bloqueo es el principal obstáculo para el desarrollo económico y social de nuestro pueblo.

Constituye una violación flagrante al Derecho Internacional, la Carta de las Naciones Unidas y la Proclama de la América Latina y el Caribe como Zona de Paz. Su aplicación extraterritorial añade una magnitud adicional a su naturaleza violatoria de la ley internacional.

¿Cómo objetar estas afirmaciones? Basta con leer los textos legales.

Fue una buena noticia el anuncio realizado por el Departamento del Tesoro de Estados Unidos de permitir a mi país utilizar el dólar estadounidense en sus transacciones internacionales, pero, hasta este momento, Cuba no ha podido realizar pagos ni depósitos en efectivo en esta moneda, debido a las multas y a los efectos intimidatorios del bloqueo y se ha incrementado, en terceros países, el cese de operaciones, el cierre de cuentas bancarias cubanas en el extranjero, la negativa de otorgar créditos y el rechazo de transferencias desde o hacia Cuba.

Al tratar de acceder desde mi país al sitio web de la división Norton de la compañía Symantec que provee servicios de prevención y eliminación de software maliciosos, es decir, virus informáticos dañinos, etcétera, se lee: “en cumplimiento de las leyes aplicables de los Estados Unidos estamos impedidos de procesar su solicitud.”

Muchos otros responden que “el cliente no tiene permiso para obtener la dirección de un sitio en Internet desde este servidor” o, simplemente: “acceso denegado”.

Otras causas, además del bloqueo, determinan nuestras dificultades económicas, como el injusto orden económico internacional, la crisis global, las deformaciones históricas y debilidades estructurales provocadas por el subdesarrollo, la alta dependencia de las importaciones energéticas y alimentarias; los efectos del cambio climático y los desastres naturales, y también, no lo disimulamos en lo absoluto, nuestros propios errores. Pueblo y gobierno luchamos arduamente para superar esta realidad.

Señor Presidente:

El 16 de abril de 2016 el Presidente Raúl Castro Ruz, expresó “tenemos la voluntad de desarrollar un diálogo respetuoso y construir un nuevo tipo de relación con Estados Unidos, como la que nunca ha existido entre

ambos países, porque estamos convencidos de que ello solo puede reportar beneficios mutuos”.

Y el pasado 17 de septiembre, hace pocos días añadió “ratificamos la voluntad de sostener relaciones de convivencia civilizada con Estados Unidos, pero Cuba no va a renunciar a uno solo de sus principios, ni a realizar concesiones inherentes a su soberanía e independencia”. (Fin de la cita).

Históricamente, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos se propuso primero la anexión de Cuba y, en su defecto, ejercer su dominación sobre ella. Al triunfar la Revolución cubana, se formuló el propósito y cito: “de provocar el desengaño y el desaliento mediante la insatisfacción económica y la penuria..., negándole a Cuba dinero y suministros, con el fin de reducir los salarios nominales y reales, con el objetivo de provocar hambre, desesperación y el derrocamiento del gobierno”.

La Directiva Presidencial de Política, publicada el pasado 14 de octubre, a la vez que afirma que el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos reconoce “la soberanía y autodeterminación de Cuba”, y que “corresponde al pueblo cubano tomar sus propias decisiones sobre su futuro”, no oculta en su lenguaje engañoso el propósito de alterar el orden constitucional y promover cambios en el sistema económico, político, social y cultural de Cuba, ni esconde la intención de continuar desarrollando programas injerencistas que responden a los intereses de los Estados Unidos, ni el intento de involucrar en ellos a sectores de la sociedad cubana.

Dice en la Directiva, que no buscarán un “cambio de régimen en Cuba” pero confiesa y cito: “que los Estados Unidos apoyaremos a la emergente sociedad civil en Cuba y alentaremos a los socios y a los actores no gubernamentales a sumarse a nosotros en abogar a favor de las reformas”. Dice: “mientras los Estados Unidos mantenemos nuestro compromiso de apoyo a los activistas democráticos, también participaremos con líderes comunitarios, blogueros, activistas y otros líderes en temas sociales que puedan contribuir al diálogo interno en Cuba sobre la participación cívica”.

Sigue diciendo la Directiva: “Los Estados Unidos mantendremos nuestros programas de democracia y radiodifusión, mientras que protegeremos nuestros intereses y valores,



ONU VOTACIONES					
1992 2016 Resolución contra el Bloqueo					
AÑO	A FAVOR	EN CONTRA	ABSTENCIONES	AUSENCIAS	PAÍSES EN CONTRA
1992	59	3	71	46	EE.UU. / Israel / Rumanía
1993	88	4	57	35	EE.UU. / Israel / Albania / Paraguay
1994	101	2	48	33	EE.UU. / Israel
1995	117	3	38	27	EE.UU. / Israel / Uzbekistán
1996	137	3	25	20	EE.UU. / Israel / Uzbekistán
1997	143	3	17	22	EE.UU. / Israel / Uzbekistán
1998	157	2	12	14	EE.UU. / Israel
1999	155	2	8	23	EE.UU. / Israel
2000	167	3	4	15	EE.UU. / Israel / Islas Marshall
2001	167	3	3	16	EE.UU. / Israel / Islas Marshall
2002	173	3	4	11	EE.UU. / Israel / Islas Marshall
2003	179	3	2	7	EE.UU. / Israel / Islas Marshall
2004	179	4	7	7	EE.UU. / Israel / Palau / Islas Marshall
2005	182	4	1	4	EE.UU. / Israel / Palau / Islas Marshall
2006	186	4	1	-	EE.UU. / Israel / Palau / Islas Marshall
2007	184	4	1	-	EE.UU. / Israel / Palau / Islas Marshall
2008	185	3	2	-	EE.UU. / Israel / Palau
2009	187	3	2	-	EE.UU. / Israel / Palau
2010	187	2	3	-	EE.UU. / Israel
2011	186	2	3	2	EE.UU. / Israel
2012	188	3	2	-	EE.UU. / Israel / Palau
2013	188	2	3	-	EE.UU. / Israel
2014	188	2	3	-	EE.UU. / Israel
2015	191	2	0	-	EE.UU. / Israel
2016	191	0	2	-	-





tales como la Base Naval de Guantánamo... el gobierno de los Estados Unidos” —dice— “no tienen intención de modificar el tratado de arrendamiento vigente y otras disposiciones relacionadas.”

Al presentar la Directiva, se declaró y cito: “no podemos quedarnos sentados a esperar

que Cuba cambie sin involucrarnos.”

La Directiva reclama que Cuba y cito: “se mantiene en deuda con el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos respecto a deudas bilaterales contraídas antes de la Revolución cubana.”

¿Acaso pretenden que la Revolución cubana pague las deudas de la dictadura sangrienta de Fulgencio Batista?. Debieran entender que ya somos libres, precisamente porque en 1959 nos liberamos del imperialismo estadounidense y de la dictadura impuesta por este.

A la “Iniciativa para una Nueva Cuba” de George W. Bush, del 19 de mayo de 2002, que pretendió condicionar una flexibilización de las prohibiciones en vigor, aún vigentes, sobre los viajes y el comercio, a la realización de cambios políticos y económicos internos, los cubanos respondieron el 26 de junio de ese año con ocho millones de firmas en respaldo a la Enmienda Constitucional que hace parte de la Constitución de la República de Cuba, que proclama el carácter irrevocable del socialismo en nuestro país.

Sería provechoso reconocer que cambiar a Cuba es solo asunto soberano de los cubanos y que Cuba es un país verdaderamente independiente. Lo es porque ganó su independencia por sí mismo y ha sabido y sabrá defenderla al precio de los mayores sacrificios y riesgos. Debieran saber que nuestro pueblo conquistó el poder, se “empoderó” a sí mismo hace tiempo y cotidianamente ejerce el poder soberano, el poder popular, solo eso explica que estemos aquí esta mañana.

Estamos orgullosos de nuestra historia y de nuestra cultura que son el tesoro más preciado. No olvidaremos jamás el pasado porque es la forma de no regresar nunca a él. Ya decidimos nuestro camino al futuro y sabemos que es largo y difícil, pero no nos desviaremos de él por ingenuidad, por cantos de sirenas, ni por error. No hay fuerza en el mundo que pueda obligarnos a ello.

Hemos convertido en realidades muchos sueños, propios y también comunes a otros

pueblos. Estamos llenos de sueños por construir, pero son los nuestros. No necesitamos sueños ajenos a nuestra cultura ni a nuestra historia.

Por y para los jóvenes se ha hecho y se hace cotidianamente la Revolución cubana. Los jóvenes cubanos, que se parecen tanto a su época, son tan patriotas y antimperialistas como sus padres y abuelos.

Tenemos y defenderemos nuestros propios valores y símbolos que iremos enriqueciendo, pero serán siempre cubanos. No los cambiaremos por otros extraños.

Lucharemos por construir una Nación soberana, independiente, socialista, democrática, próspera y sostenible. No volveremos al capitalismo.

Como dijo el líder de la Revolución Fidel Castro Ruz, el pasado 19 de abril: “perfeccionaremos lo que debamos perfeccionar, con lealtad meridiana y la fuerza unida, como Martí, Maceo y Gómez, en marcha indetenible.”

Señor Presidente:

Distinguidos Representantes Permanentes:

Estimados Delegados:

El levantamiento del bloqueo es el factor clave para avanzar hacia la normalización de las relaciones con los Estados Unidos y es lo que dará sentido, profundidad y solidez a lo alcanzado.

El bloqueo es injusto, inhumano, inmoral e ilegal y debe cesar unilateral e incondicionalmente.

El cambio de voto que la embajadora Samantha Power acaba de anunciar es una señal promisorio. Tenemos la esperanza de que se refleje en la realidad.

Agradecemos profundamente a todos los gobiernos y pueblos, parlamentos, fuerzas políticas y movimientos sociales, representantes de la sociedad civil, organizaciones internacionales y regionales que han contribuido con su voz o su voto, año tras año, a fundamentar la justeza y la urgencia de la abolición del bloqueo.

Extendemos nuestra sincera gratitud al pueblo estadounidense, por su apoyo creciente a este loable propósito.

Muchas gracias (Aplausos).

*continued from page 28*

Our people conquered power; it “empowered” itself long ago, and day after day they exercise the sovereign power, the people’s power. That is why we are here today.

We are proud of our history and our culture, our most prized treasure. We will never forget our past because that’s the only way to never go back to it. We have already chosen our path to the future, which we know will be long and difficult, but we will not divert our course out of naivety or by mistake. There is no force on Earth capable of forcing us to do that.

We have seen many dreams come true –both ours and others that we have shared with other peoples. We have plenty of dreams that are yet to be realized, but those are our dreams. We don’t need dreams that are alien to our culture and our history.

The Cuban Revolution was made and is being made every day by the youth and for the youth. And while the Cuban youths resemble their times more than they resemble their parents, they are as patriotic and anti-imperialist as their parents and grandparents.

We have and we will defend our own values and symbols which we will continue to enrich, but they will always be Cuban. We will never change them for others that are strange to us.

We will struggle to build a sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable nation. We will never go back to capitalism.

As was stated by the leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, on April 19 last: “We will perfect whatever needs to be perfected, with utmost loyalty and united force, as was done by Martí, Maceo and Gómez, in an unstoppable march.”

Mr. President:

Distinguished Permanent Representatives:

Esteemed delegates:

Lifting the blockade is the key to be able to advance towards the normalization of relations with the United States; it is what will give some meaning, depth and soundness to what has been achieved so far.

The blockade is unjust, inhuman, immoral and illegal and should unilaterally and unconditionally cease.

We are deeply grateful to all governments and peoples, parliaments, political forces and social movements, representatives of the civil society, international and regional organizations, who have contributed their voices and votes, year after year, to substantiate the fairness and urgency of the abolishment of the blockade.

We would like to convey our gratitude to the US people for their ever-growing support to this lofty purpose.

I ask you to vote in favor of draft resolution A/71/L.3 entitled “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.”

Thank you, very much.



	
<b>CUBA VS. BLOCKADE</b>	
	
Voting Result:	
IN FAVOUR	191
AGAINST	0
ABSTENTION	2

*"President Obama is set to leave office, but the blockade remains"*

Talk by Josefina Vidal, the Ministry of Foreign Relations' director general for the United States, at a University of Havana on October 17, at an event to denounce the U.S. blockade and discuss recent announcements made by President Obama regarding relations with Cuba

Good morning everyone.

Thank you all very much for the invitation, to add my voice to those of young people gathered here, and the people of Cuba, as I have already done online, on social media, to the 'Cuba votes against the blockade' event; because the blockade harms the Cuban people, damages Cuba as a whole, damages the functioning of our economy, damages Cuba's relations with third countries and those of third countries with Cuba, and even damages the relations we could have with the United States itself. For all these reasons we will vote against the blockade, and those who have not, still have the chance to on the "Cuba contra el bloqueo" (Cuba against the blockade) website.

Before having a conversation - as I understand that this is a conversation with you and that I will take questions from you, I do not want this to be a monologue - I would like to share a few introductory thoughts - I will not be very extensive in my introduction - considering that just three days ago, there were announcements made in the United States related to Cuba, there were two announcements: first, a presidential policy directive, entitled 'United States-Cuba Normalization' and secondly, the fifth package of measures to modify the

application of certain aspects of the blockade.

There have been discussions on this, since last Friday, at the Foreign Ministry, through the Cuban press, on digital sites like **Cubadebate**, but I think it is important, as we had a little more time over the weekend to think about this, as these measures were announced just last Friday, October 14, to share with you some thoughts and some preliminary conclusions, which we have reached following the study and analysis of these two announcements.

Firstly, I would like to refer to the presidential policy directive on Cuba. It is the first directive on Cuba approved and issued by President Obama who, as you know, is set to leave office in a few months, on January 20, 2017 to be exact, when a new administration, resulting from the elections to be held on November 8, will assume the leadership of that country, that is to say very soon.

As I told some media outlets that we quickly called to MINREX last Friday, to provide our first reactions to the announcement of this directive, and I repeat today, we believe that this document is a significant step in the process toward lifting the blockade and to improving relations with Cuba.

This is the second time a U.S. President has issued a directive providing instructions to the various branches of the federal government to initiate and conduct a process leading toward the normalization of relations with Cuba. The first to do so was President Carter in 1977, I have here a copy of the original document. This was his directive (points) indicating exploratory steps for the normalization of relations with Cuba; it was a secret document until 2002, when he asked his library to declassify it and brought it to Cuba and gave it to us in the context of his visit to our country at that time. It was a simple, brief directive, just one and a half pages and, as you know, given what happened in the history of relations with Cuba, nothing came of it, and it was not possible during his Presidency to advance toward the normalization of the relations.

Now President Obama has issued a slightly longer document, its translation into Spanish has 15 pages, on which I want to offer my observations.

This document issued by Obama establishes a guide for developing a process that in the future should lead to the normalization of relations. But keep in mind that what is reflected in this document comes from the





perspective of the U.S. government, and therefore the document itself is not free of the interventionist vision that has historically marked the plans of the United States toward Cuba.

I would like to make a brief analysis of its content, and for this I will refer, initially, to what we believe are some positive elements

that appear in this directive.

First, it is an attempt, which must be recognized, to try to ensure the future continuity of the current policy, which commenced on December 17, 2014, but only if a future president of the United States decides to follow that course. It is a policy of this Presidency and there is no obligation to follow it to the letter by future U.S. governments; perhaps some will, perhaps others not, maybe in part, maybe they will simply revoke it and emit a totally different directive. Nonetheless, we must recognize that it is a step in the right direction, leaving a guide that could be useful in a scenario in which a future President of that country wants to continue this policy.

The document - and we believe this is the first time, according to our studies over many years - for the first time an official document of the United States government includes recognition of the independence, sovereignty, and self-determination of Cuba, which we, ever since reestablishing relations with this country, believe should be, and must remain, the essential principles on which to develop our ties going forward.

There is also recognition in this directive, again for the first time, of the legitimacy of the Cuban government. One must understand that the policy of the United States for over 55 years included, in every aspect, the absolute non-recognition of the government of Cuba as a legitimate interlocutor; at all times Cuba's legitimacy was denied, and that was a hallmark of all policies followed over more than five decades.

Well, in this directive the recognition of the government of Cuba appears as a valid, serious, legitimate interlocutor and equal to the U.S. government and, in turn, there is a recognition of the benefits that achieving a relationship of civilized coexistence would produce for both countries and both peoples, within the great differences that exist and, of course, will continue to exist in the future.

And in particular the directive resolves

to continue developing ties with the Cuban government and cooperation in areas of mutual interest. And it reiterates, something President Obama has said on other occasions, that the blockade is obsolete and must be lifted, and once again urges the United States Congress to work in that direction.

However, up to here the essential components that we believe have a favorable nuance to their treatment within the directive. But at the same time, there is a group of elements that have an interventionist trait.

The directive does not hide, and from its opening paragraphs this is visible, that the objective of U.S. policy is to advance the interests of that country in Cuba, which is to promote changes in the political, economic and social order of our country. In turn, it reflects a marked interest in the development of the private sector in Cuba — we know why they emphasize this — and fundamentally questions the political system with which we Cubans have equipped ourselves.

It does not renounce, in fact it recognizes that the use of old instruments of past policy, the policy of hostility toward Cuba, will continue in the future, and mentions in particular that the illegal radio and television broadcasts against Cuba will continue; the programs they (the U.S.) claim are aimed to “promote democracy” in Cuba and are of a subversive nature that aim to promote changes in our country will continue, and the intention remains to involve a wide range of Cuban society in the implementation of these programs.

Finally, something which is very important — it is not the last thing said, but it's the last thought I share with you — it clearly states that the United States does not intend to modify the treaty that resulted in the occupation of a portion of Cuban territory by the Guantánamo Naval Base.

In short, as conclusive elements of the analysis we have conducted on the presidential policy directive for the normalization of relations with Cuba:

It establishes a new policy based on the recognition that the previous failed. But, how did it fail? Well, it clearly states that it failed to achieve changes in Cuba that



*October 17, 2016: Josefina Vidal takes a question from a student outside the University of Havana in Cuba*

respond to the interests of the United States. Therefore, there is a change in policy, it is confirmed that there is a modification to policy, but not to the strategic objective that this policy will continue to pursue, which is to promote changes in our country. For this it (the U.S.) resorts to old methods, the long-established ones, those of the past, which I have already mentioned. In other words, this policy will continue to support instruments such as subversive programs, illegal radio and television broadcasts, the blockade restrictions that could be eliminated by executive decision and have not been, despite the full extent of executive powers that the president has and in turn, mixed, combined with those instruments of the past are new methods in line with the new bilateral reality, which is the exchanges of all kinds between Cuba and the United States, limited trade in accordance with the minimal restrictions that have been changed so far, dialogue and cooperation with the Cuban government on issues of mutual interest.

The call on Congress to lift the blockade is reiterated, arguing that it is a heavy and obsolete burden on the people of Cuba; but, at the same time, it is clearly stated that it is important that the blockade is lifted because it constitutes an impediment to the U.S. in advancing its interests in Cuba.

Recognized — as I said — is the self-determination and independence of Cuba, the legitimacy of the Cuban government, it is even argued that the United States does not intend to impose a new model in our country and that it corresponds to the Cuban people to make their own decisions; however, at the same time, this directive does not abandon its interventionist designs and the usual behavior of wanting to interfere in the internal affairs of our country.

In summary, the directive in itself contains ideas and intentions that contradict the declared objective to normalize relations with



*Cuban students participate in the #YoVotoVsBloqueo campaign in Havana, Cuba*

There is no expansion of U.S. exports to Cuba beyond the very limited sales that were approved in previous packages, that exclude these products from the United States from being used in essential branches of the Cuban economy.

careful, take note! This does not mean that Cuban rum and cigar companies are authorized to sell their products in the United States. Therefore, the impact of this measure will be very limited in terms of the benefits the Cuban economy can report.

Furthermore, new measures in the financial area were not announced; as you know, Cuba's room for maneuver in the financial sector is still very restricted in terms of relations with the United States and the rest of the world. Although the use of the dollar in Cuba's international transactions was authorized last March, I reiterate that up until today, as I was checking on Saturday with Cuban counterparts, up until today, Cuba has still not been able to make cash deposits in this currency or make payments to third parties in U.S. dollars. As such, it is a measure awaiting implementation and this is due, in particular, to the fact that the world's banks remain terrified given the risk which working and interacting with Cuba entails, and the possibility of incurring fines, as has happened considerably in recent years. And the ban on Cuba opening correspondent accounts in U.S. banks has remained unchanged.

That is why we believe, and I repeat this today to conclude, that the new measures adopted and which take effect today, benefit the United States more than Cuba and the people of Cuba. The blockade persists. President Obama has just reiterated in the Presidential directive signed last Friday that the blockade should be lifted, but the reality is that he has not exhausted all his executive powers to contribute decisively to the dismantling and removal of the blockade. President Obama will complete his mandate within three months, he leaves, but the blockade remains. While this situation continues, Cuba will continue to present its resolution calling for the lifting of the blockade to the United Nations. We'll do it again in nine days, on October 26, Wednesday; we invite all of you to follow the coverage of this activity which will be broadcast live from the United Nations headquarters in New York, and we hope that, as has happened in recent years, the world, as all of us have already done, will vote against the blockade.

Thank you very much (Applause).

*For the transcript of the question & answer with Josefina Vidal, visit: <http://en.granma.cu>*



On this occasion, we want to reiterate once again that the will of the government of Cuba is to develop respectful and cooperative relations with the United States; but this has to be on the basis of full equality and reciprocity, absolute respect for the independence and sovereignty of Cuba and without interference of any kind.

And more in keeping with the theme that we will address today, which is the blockade, coinciding with the presidential policy directive, last Friday, October 14, a new package of measures was also announced by the U.S. Departments of Treasury and Commerce, to modify the application of certain aspects of the blockade.

These measures come into effect today. The measures — as we said last Friday in preliminary statements to the press — are positive, but have a very limited scope. You only have to view their content to immediately realize this. Most are aimed at expanding transactions that had been previously approved and that, in general, have been very difficult to implement, to put into practice, as a result of the fact that a set of restrictions remain in force that prevent progress in their application.

As a summary of these regulations, the fundamental limitations that we observe are:

First, investments in Cuba are not permitted, and this is something that President Obama could authorize. Remember that in January 2015, and in his subsequent packages of measures, President Obama approved and authorized investments in Cuba in the field of telecommunications, which demonstrates "Yes, we can", as states the slogan of President Obama himself; however, to date he has not chosen to use the powers he has to allow investments by U.S. companies in Cuba in many other sectors of our economy, not just in telecommunications.

To give you an idea, U.S. exports to Cuba for tourism, or for energy production, or for oil drilling and exploration, or for the mining industry, are not permitted. As you can see, some of the most important industries in our economy.

In a general sense, all bans on imports of Cuban products to the United States remain. There is one exception which was approved in this latest package of measures last Friday, finally, after many demands from certain very interested U.S. companies, which is the possibility, from now on, that Cuban pharmaceuticals be exported to the United States, it is the only exception made for products that are produced by Cuban state enterprises. In other words, Cuban state enterprises, in general, are prohibited from exporting to the United States, the only exception now are pharmaceutical products. Welcome news! Of course, we will have to wait for the United States Food and Drug Administration to certify these Cuban products in order that their marketing and distribution in the United States can be defined and materialize; but, again, we believe this is a positive step.

I would like to draw your attention to a very curious aspect, when this package of measures was announced last Friday, one thing became world news: U.S. citizens visiting Cuba from now on will be able to buy cigars and rum without limits and take them to the United States for personal use. This has been broadcast across the world. Welcome to the U.S. citizens who can now buy cigars and rum in Cuba... It seems to me that this puts an end to a ridiculous ban, which only permitted U.S. citizens who came to Cuba to buy one music CD, one book, one work of art, as a result of an exception approved in the late 1980s, which allowed the acquisition of informative and cultural materials; however, until now they could not buy rum, or cigars, or coffee, or many other Cuban products that may be of interest and now, finally, this ban has been removed, they may do so; but,





# International Days of Action Lead to International Victory for Cuba at the UN!

## Vancouver Actions Demand: End the Blockade on Cuba Now!

*By Noah Fine*

October 2016 marked one of the greatest victories of Cuba's decades long effort to bring an end to the illegal and unjust U.S. blockade of their island. For the 25<sup>th</sup> consecutive year the United Nations voted overwhelmingly to bring an end to the blockade. This year with 192 countries voting in favor of Cuba's resolution and only the U.S. and Israel abstaining from the vote, the world displayed almost unanimously its' condemnation of the blockade.

Leading up to the vote Cuba asked friends from around the world to join them in an international period of action demanding an end to the U.S. Blockade. Cuba's call to action this time came with a special request that groups join them in a "flashmob" style dance themed against the Blockade. Groups from around the



world answered Cuba's call, including the Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade-Vancouver (FCAB).

On October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016 FCAB organized a special day of action in solidarity with Cuba and against the blockade. Supporters of Cuba first gathered in front of the U.S. Consulate downtown Vancouver to hold a monthly protest action against the U.S. blockade. However this month was planned with Cuba's requested flashmob dance. Friends of Cuba all took part in a live musical and dance performance in front of the U.S. Consulate regardless of the heavy rain.

After the protest action, participants made their way to Joe's Café on Commercial Drive in East Vancouver to take part in a conference and webinar about the U.S. Blockade on Cuba. FCAB organized the webinar so that groups and individuals from around the world could watch the conference in real-time and participate no matter where they live over the Internet. FCAB coordinator Azza Rojbi welcomed participants to the conference before

showing a video interview with Cuban minister in charge of US affairs, Josefina Vidal. Josefina has been chief negotiator in the U.S.-Cuba reestablishment of relations. FCAB coordinator Azza Rojbi then gave a history of the U.S. Blockade on Cuba concluding with addressing the changes that have been made in U.S.-Cuba relations but emphasizing on the critical issues that the U.S. has not yet changed: The U.S. Blockade, occupation of Guantánamo Bay and financing regime change programs against Cuba. "Although we acknowledge the achievements of the Obama government in reestablishing diplomatic relations with Cuba, we must continue to mount pressure on the U.S. government until they end the most criminal aspects of their over half century attacks against the Cuban people," stated Rojbi. "We will continue our monthly protest campaign in front of the U.S. Consulate alongside many other events until the U.S. respects the Self-Determination of Cuba by ending the blockade," concluded Azza.

The webinar and conference concluded with another performance of the flashmob dance against the blockade.

To see the full webinar video and flashmob dance performance please search "FCAB Vancouver" on youtube.

*Follow Noah Fine on Twitter:  
@noahfine*



# ¡Venceremos!

## Brazil Students Occupy Over 1,000 Schools to Protest Neoliberalism

27 October 2016

Students protesting the neoliberal educational reforms of Brazil's unelected President Michel Temer have expanded their nationwide occupation to at least 1,108 public schools and universities across 19 states, as well as the federal district that contains the capital, Brasília.

The protests are led by the Brazilian Union of Secondary Students, known as Ubes, and other local organizations critical of the Temer administration's revisions to the high-school system and the so-called PEC reform, which among other things will end public subsidies to students older than 20 years.

In the state of Paraná alone, students have occupied 851 schools, another 66 in Minas, 13 in Rio Grande do Sul and 10 in Rio Grande do Norte, and Goiás. In the Federal District, and Rio, there are seven occupied schools apiece and in the largest state of Sao Paulo, five schools.

The Brazilian constitution stipulates that 18 percent of the country's total federal tax budget be allocated to education. But the Senate is trying to reduce that figure.

If approved, PEC 241 would cut government expenditures over the next two decades, reducing it as a percentage of national GDP, which critics argue would translate into an onerous burden on the poor.

Michel Temer, who led the parliamentary coup against President Dilma Rousseff, has introduced a series of sweeping privatization proposals and cuts in education health and other social programs, since he was sworn in last August.

Source: teleSUR English with edits

## In Iceland, Women Leave Work at 2:38pm to Protest Gender Wage Gap

October 25, 2016

Thousands of women across Iceland walked out of work at 2:38pm local time Monday to protest the country's gender wage gap, arguing that their lower wages mean they effectively work without pay after that point.

"No woman chooses to be oppressed," said one activist filmed in Reykjavik during the protest by the U.K.'s Channel 4 News. "No woman chooses to get paid less than men."

The walk-out occurred on the 41st anniversary of Iceland's famous Women's Day Off, when 90 percent of women in Iceland stopped working—at home and on the job—to raise awareness of the role women's work plays in society.

Women in Iceland still earn 14 percent less than their male counterparts. (In the U.S., women working full-time earn 20 percent less than men.) On October 24th each year, women in Iceland leave work once again and rally during what's now known as Women's Day for Equal Pay.

"Gylfi Arnþjórsson, president of the Icelandic Confederation of Labor, told the country's official national broadcaster RÚV, that for 60 years it has been illegal in Iceland to discriminate on the basis of gender," the Independent writes. "Wage contracts can take into account education level and type of job, but not whether someone is male or female."

"No one puts up with waiting 50 years to reach a goal," Arnþjórsson told the British newspaper. "It doesn't matter whether it's a gender pay gap or any other pay gap. It's just unacceptable to say we'll correct this in 50 years. That's a lifetime."

A mass rally was held in downtown Reykjavik on Monday October 17. Participants shared photos and videos of the demonstration under the hashtag #kvennafri ("Women's Day Off").

Source: Common Dreams with edits

# We Will Win!

## Women Take to Streets Again as Poland Proposes New Abortion Ban

24 October 2016

Only weeks after thousands of protesters poured into the streets of Poland to reverse a bill banning abortion, fresh massive protests were held again to stare down the latest challenge to women's reproductive rights.

While Poland's MPs rejected a near-total ban on abortions on October 6 following a nationwide general strike organized by women, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, leader of the governing ultra right wing Law and Justice Party (PiS), said his socially conservative party is working on a new bill.

"We will strive to ensure that even in pregnancies which are very difficult, when a child is sure to die, or strongly deformed, women end up giving birth so that the child can be baptized, buried, and have a name," he said last week.

As an overwhelmingly Catholic country with one of the most restrictive abortion laws in all of Europe, the only procedure that is legal is when there is severe and irreversible damage to the fetus, a serious threat to the mother's health, or when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.

Prior to the Oct. 6 ruling and the protests that spurred it, the draft law proposed in early October sought to punish women who had abortions to 5-year prison terms. It would also jail doctors who had performed the abortions.

Monday October 17 protests saw thousands of women gather in major cities to protest the continued curtailing of reproductive rights. In Warsaw, demonstrators brandished banners saying, "We have brains as well as a uterus."

Source: teleSUR English with edits

## Venezuela and Cuba Show Solidarity with Haiti After the Hurricane

8 October 2016

The governments of Cuba and Venezuela have shown their solidarity with Haiti by sending specialized personnel and humanitarian aid to alleviate the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people affected by Hurricane Matthew that left over 870 killed, 350,000 in need and ravaged the country.

Cuba sent a group of 38 health professionals from the Henry Reeve Brigade who are trained in disaster medicine and infectious disease containment. The volunteer team was outfitted with essential medicines and equipment and has already arrived in the Haitian capital of Port au Prince.

For its part the Venezuelan government has already sent two shipments with humanitarian aid, the first was an airplane with 20 tons of non-perishable food, water, blankets, kitchen utensils, disposable materials, tents, ponchos and medicines.

Meanwhile, the death toll from the Category 4 hurricane, which has devastated the impoverished Caribbean nation, continues to climb, with scores of people still missing since last Tuesday when it landed with howling winds measuring 145 miles per hour.

Matthew, which has been downgraded to Category 1 storm, also hit the United States, Jamaica, Cuba and the Bahamas.

Haiti was particularly affected because it is the poorest country in the Americas, has not yet fully recovered from a devastating 2010 earthquake which decimated its infrastructure, while political stability remains elusive.

Source: teleSUR English with edits



# U.S. Elections are Mass Distractions

By Manuel Yepe\*

The main utility of presidential elections in the US is simply that it's a weapon of mass distraction –creating a fiction that presidents actually rule and that voters actually determine the country's destiny.

In truth, presidents and their minions in Congress and the Supreme Court may govern, but they certainly don't rule. Elections serve to transfer power from one set of elites to another set of elites, cloaking the spectacle in democratic legitimacy, as the ruling class watch from their corporate suites, pleased with the quadrennial national consensus-building bread & circus event.

This is how Gerald Sussman, a sociologist and Professor in the Toulan School of Urban Studies and Planning at Portland State University, defines the US electoral system in his essay "American Elections: Weapons of Mass Distraction".

If Bernie Sanders had managed to capture the largest number of delegates, the nomination, and the election, it simply would have left a democratic socialist in the White House with all the levers of power intact to discipline him back to what Noam Chomsky has called "the spectrum of thinkable thought."

"Indeed –wrote Sussman– if the ruling class were a bit wiser, they would have backed Bernie instead of Hillary for the nomination and the presidency just to crush the hopes of the left. The real value of the Sanders campaign was to incite courage in young people to confront the establishment. A Clinton victory in November might bring thousands of protesters into the streets, but a Trump victory would probably bring millions."

The designation, in recent conventions,

of two of the presidential candidates most despised by the activists and supporters of their own parties –Democratic and Republican respectively– has placed millions of voters between the proverbial rock and a hard place before the presidential election on November 8th.

They are equally forced to choose between Donald Trump (R) and Hillary Clinton (D), the lesser of two evils.

Driven by the fallacy that democracy consists of choosing between the two



options offered by the two-party system (duopoly) there must be many in the United States today who believe that the small number of options offered is to be blamed for this situation, and think a multiplicity of parties would be the solution.

But soon enough they learn of the existence of many countries where there are multiple parties (dozens and even hundreds), and the situation is the same: power always remains in the hands of rich, who govern for the benefit of the rich.

Historically in the US, whenever an upstart candidate has emerged, having

somehow managed to infiltrate the system to the point of seriously jeopardizing the duopolistic control of power (as happened with Jesse Jackson in 1988, Ross Perot in 1992, Ralph Nader and Howard Dean in 2004 and to some extent Bernie Sanders in 2016), they have been confronted by the money, the means and the Machiavellian methods of pressure which, in the end, prove insurmountable, although for some time they serve as a distraction for their followers.

As journalist Barbara G. Ellis has noted on the Truthout website, Bernie Sanders became a monumental threat to the Democratic nomination with demonstrations of tens of thousands of potential voters across the country. Volunteers, mostly young people, vastly outnumbered those of Clinton.

Simultaneously, Trump, with his rallies and wins in the primaries, seemed to be in the same situation with respect to the Republican machinery.

Just as anguish and despair become increasingly pressing for the destitute masses in the world and foreshadow an inevitable popular uprising at a global scale, within the US, the contradiction between the 1% that dominates everything and the 99% who can no longer be fooled by the myths and tricks of representative democracy controlled by the rich becomes more acute.

The experience gathered from the ongoing electoral process in the US clearly shows that small cosmetic changes are not enough to make the current system work. Neither new parties or structural changes in the existing ones, nor unstable coalitions will be able to save the system. The problem lies in the unjust nature of the capitalist system itself that, by its current imperialist nature, hinders the democratic development of the nation and oppresses its citizens.

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[www.englishmanualeyepe.wordpress.com](http://www.englishmanualeyepe.wordpress.com)

# Elecciones en EE.UU. Son Distracción Masiva

Por Manuel Yepe\*

La principal utilidad de las elecciones presidenciales en los Estados Unidos es que son un arma de distracción masiva que crea la ficción de que presidentes y votantes determinan realmente el destino del país. En verdad, esos presidentes y sus secuaces en el Congreso y la Corte Suprema pudieran gobernar, pero ciertamente no gobiernan. Las elecciones sirven para transferir energía de un sistema de las élites a otro conjunto de las propias élites, son un espectáculo de camuflaje en la legitimidad democrática, un evento cuadrienal de consenso nacional de pan y circo que patrocina la clase gobernante desde sus suites corporativas.

Aproximadamente así define el sistema electoral de Estados Unidos Gerald Sussman, sociólogo y profesor en la escuela Toulan de estudios urbanos y planificación de la Universidad Estatal de Portland en un ensayo que titula “Elecciones americanas. Armas de distracción masiva”.

Si Bernie Sanders hubiera logrado captar el mayor número de

delegados, la nominación y la elección simplemente habría servido para instalar una democracia socialista en la Casa Blanca con todas las palancas de la energía intactas para disciplinarlo todo nuevamente en lo que Noam Chomsky ha llamado “el espectro del pensamiento pensable.” De hecho, según Sussman, si la clase dirigente fuera un poco más sabia, habría respaldado por Bernie, en vez de a Hillary para la nominación y la Presidencia, sólo para aplastar las esperanzas de la izquierda. El valor real de la campaña de Sanders ha sido incitar a la valentía en los jóvenes para hacer frente a la realidad. Una victoria de Hillary Clinton en noviembre podría llevar a miles de manifestantes a protestar en las calles, pero una victoria de Trump probablemente provocaría millones.

La proclamación en las recientes convenciones de dos de los candidatos presidenciales más despreciados por los militantes y simpatizantes de sus propios partidos -demócrata y republicano respectivamente- ha puesto a millones de votantes entre la proverbial espada y la



con vistas a la elección presidencial del 8 de noviembre.

Se consideran por igual obligados a escoger, entre Donald Trump (R) y Hillary Clinton (D), al menor de dos males.

Llevados por la falacia de que la democracia consiste en escoger entre las dos opciones que les ofrece el sistema de dos partidos (duopolio) debe haber muchos hoy en Estados Unidos que culpen de la situación al reducido número de opciones que se les ofrece y piensan que una multiplicidad de partidos sería la solución.

Solo que no tardan en informarse de la existencia de muchos países donde existen múltiples partidos (decenas y hasta cientos) y la situación es la misma: el poder siempre se mantienen en manos de los ricos, que gobiernan en beneficio de los ricos.

Históricamente, cuando en Estados Unidos ha surgido un candidato advenedizo que de alguna forma ha logrado infiltrarse en el sistema al punto de poner seriamente en peligro el control duopólico del poder (como sucedió a Jesse Jackson en 1988, Ross Perot en 1992, Ralph Nader y Howard Dean en 2004 así como, de alguna manera a Bernie Sanders en 2016, se han enfrentado al dinero, los medios y métodos maquiavélicos de presión que al final resultan insuperables aunque por un tiempo sirven de distracción a sus seguidores.

Como ha señalado en el portal digital Thruthout la periodista Barbara G. Ellis, Bernie Sanders se convirtió en una amenaza monumental para la nominación

demócrata con manifestaciones de decenas de miles potenciales votantes en todo el país. Su voluntarios, jóvenes en su mayoría, superaban ampliamente en número a los de Clinton.

Simultáneamente Trump parecía estar -con sus mítines y ganancias en las primarias- en la misma situación respecto a la maquinaria republicana.

Así como la angustia y desesperación se va haciendo cada vez mas presionante para las masas de desposeídos en el mundo y presagian una inevitable insurrección popular a escala global, en el seno de Estados Unidos se hace más aguda la contradicción entre el 1% que lo domina todo y el 99% que no puede seguir engañado con mitos y trucos de la democracia representativa bajo control de los ricos.

A partir de las experiencias que va dejando el proceso electoral en curso en Estados Unidos se comprende que no basta con pequeños cambios cosméticos para hacer que el sistema actual funcione. No serán nuevos partidos, ni cambios estructurales en los actuales partidos, ni coaliciones inestables, lo que puedan salvarlo. El problema está en la naturaleza injusta del sistema capitalista que, por su naturaleza imperialista actual, frena el desarrollo democrático de la nación y oprime a sus ciudadanos.

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# OUR HERITAGE



## Rosa Luxemburg

Revolutionary Marxist Leader  
1871-1919

### *The Dreyfus Affair and the Millerand Case (1899)*

"The character of a bourgeois government isn't determined by the personal character of its members, but by its organic function in bourgeois society. The government of the modern state is essentially an organization of class domination, the regular functioning of which is one of the conditions of existence of the class state. With the entry of a socialist into the government, and class domination continuing to exist, the bourgeois government doesn't transform itself into a socialist government, but a socialist transforms himself into a bourgeois minister."

### *The Elections to the National Assembly (1918)*

"The elections, the tribune of the National Assembly, must be utilized to mobilize the masses against the National Assembly and to rally them to the most exacting struggle. Our participation in the elections is necessary not in order to collaborate with the bourgeoisie and its shield-bearers in making laws, but to cast out the bourgeoisie and its shield-bearers from the temple, to storm the fortress of the counter-revolution, and to raise above it the victorious banner of the proletarian revolution."

In order to do this, is a majority in the National Assembly necessary? Only those who subscribe to parliamentary cretinism, who would decide the revolution and socialism with parliamentary majorities, believe this. Not the parliamentary majority in the National Assembly, but the proletarian mass outside, in the factories and on the streets, will decide the fate of the National Assembly."

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# "By Any Means Necessary..."



## MALCOLM X SPEAKS

On U.S. Presidential Elections

"It isn't a president who can help or hurt; it is the system. And this system is not only ruling us in America, it is ruling the world. Nowadays, when a man is running for president of the United States, he is not running for president of the United States alone; he has to be acceptable to other areas of the world where American influence rules."

If Johnson had been running all by himself, he would not have been acceptable to anyone. The only thing that made him acceptable to the world was that the shrewd capitalists, the shrewd imperialists, knew that the only way people would run toward the fox would be if you showed them a wolf. So they created a ghastly alternative. And it had the whole world — including people who call themselves Marxists — hoping that Johnson would beat Goldwater.

I have to say this: Those who claim to be enemies of the system were on their hands and knees waiting for Johnson to get elected — because he is supposed to be a man of peace. And at that moment he had troops invading the Congo and South Vietnam! He even has troops in areas where other imperialists have already withdrawn. Peace Corps to Nigeria, mercenaries to the Congo!"

- In a November 23, 1964 meeting of the Pan-African magazine *Présence Africaine*.

# Israel: Pirates of the Mediterranean



*Left to Right: A Palestinian woman cries amid destroyed buildings in Gaza's Beit Hanun district on July 26, 2014; a picture of the Women's Boat to Gaza; and participants in the Women's Boat to Gaza October 2016.*

## ISRAELI GOVERNMENT HIJACKS WOMEN'S FLOTILLA TO GAZA

*By Noah Fine*

On Wednesday October 5<sup>th</sup> the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) hijacked a boat in International Waters approximately 64km off the coast of the Gaza Strip, Palestine. All of the contents of the boat were confiscated by the Israeli State and the 13 people on board arrested.

What prompted the Israeli Government to invoke this act of piracy? The same reason it always does: to stop humanitarian aid from reaching the people of the suffocated Gaza Strip, the worlds largest open-air prison since Auschwitz.

The boat was part of a growing movement of Flotillas filled with humanitarian aid destined for people in Gaza. This boat was of particular symbolism as it was a women's boat to Gaza. All 13 activists onboard were courageous women who knew they were putting their lives in danger challenging Israel's relentless siege on the people of Gaza.

In 2010, the IDF hijacked another humanitarian aid flotilla to Gaza killing ten innocent activists onboard. The IDF soldiers dropped down on the boat from helicopters under the cover of night in international waters creating panic on one of the many boats destined to Gaza with aid.

### Gaza: The Worlds Largest Open Air Prison

Gaza is the worlds most densely populated area. With 2 million Palestinian inhabitants, life for Gazan's under blockade and occupation has never been good and is daily getting worse. For the past 10 years Palestinian in Gaza have lived under a total siege by the state of Israel which controls the land, sea and air around Gaza by way of a blockade. Electricity is limited to short spurts during the day alongside a lack of potable water, food and medicine.

As if the blockade was not difficult enough for the people of Gaza, Israel also consistently launches wars and bombing campaigns against the small impoverished area. In 2014 Israel launched a 50-day campaign of bombing against Gaza which killed more than 2,251 people including 550 children and 300 women. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), 83 schools and 10 healthcare centers were also destroyed or heavily damaged.

Due to Israel's blockade on Gaza, reconstruction supplies only trickle in, if at all, leaving thousands of homes permanently demolished and leaving 75,000 people displaced still to this day. It's no wonder why more than 300,000 children in Gaza are in immediate need

of psycho-social therapy.

### Palestine: A World-Wide Symbol of Hope

However, despite the deplorable conditions thrown at the people of Gaza by Israel, Palestinians in Gaza continue to resist and fight back against the brutal occupation. They do their best to rebuild fully knowing that all of their hard work could again be destroyed at any moment. It is for that determination demonstrated time and time again by people in Gaza that Israel works so hard to quash their spirit and why solidarity with their cause is so important.

The Women's Boat to Gaza was not the first such act of solidarity and will not be the last. If you're interested in supporting or getting involved with the Freedom Flotilla Coalition please visit their website: <https://freedomflotilla.org>.

End the Blockade on Gaza Now!  
End the Occupation of Palestine Now!  
Self-Determination for Palestine Now!



*Follow Noah Fine on Twitter:  
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